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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to introduce adult literacy educators to the concept of portfolio assessment and to provide some guidance about how to incorporate portfolio assessment into adult literacy education work. An introduction describes what a portfolio is and provides an overview of the four major areas of reflection and decision making that make up the portfolio assessment process. The teacher must: (1) decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with his or her own individual approach to instruction and assessment; (2) plan portfolio assessment; (3) implement portfolio assessment; and (4) evaluate the process and revise it for future use. The next section focuses on the process of clarifying the philosophy and approach to instruction and deciding if portfolio assessment is consistent with the instructional program. The next two sections look at the processes of planning and implementing portfolio assessment, highlighting adult literacy educators' and students' experience. This is followed by a discussion of impacts, administrative issues, and recommendations for the field, including national and local support mechanisms, training for trainers in portfolio assessment, incorporation of portfolio assessment into the indicators of program quality, and improved professional support and working conditions. Appendixes include sample forms and tools that programs and educators have created for portfolio assessment, and a 22-item selected annotated bibliography. Contains 46 references. (YLB)

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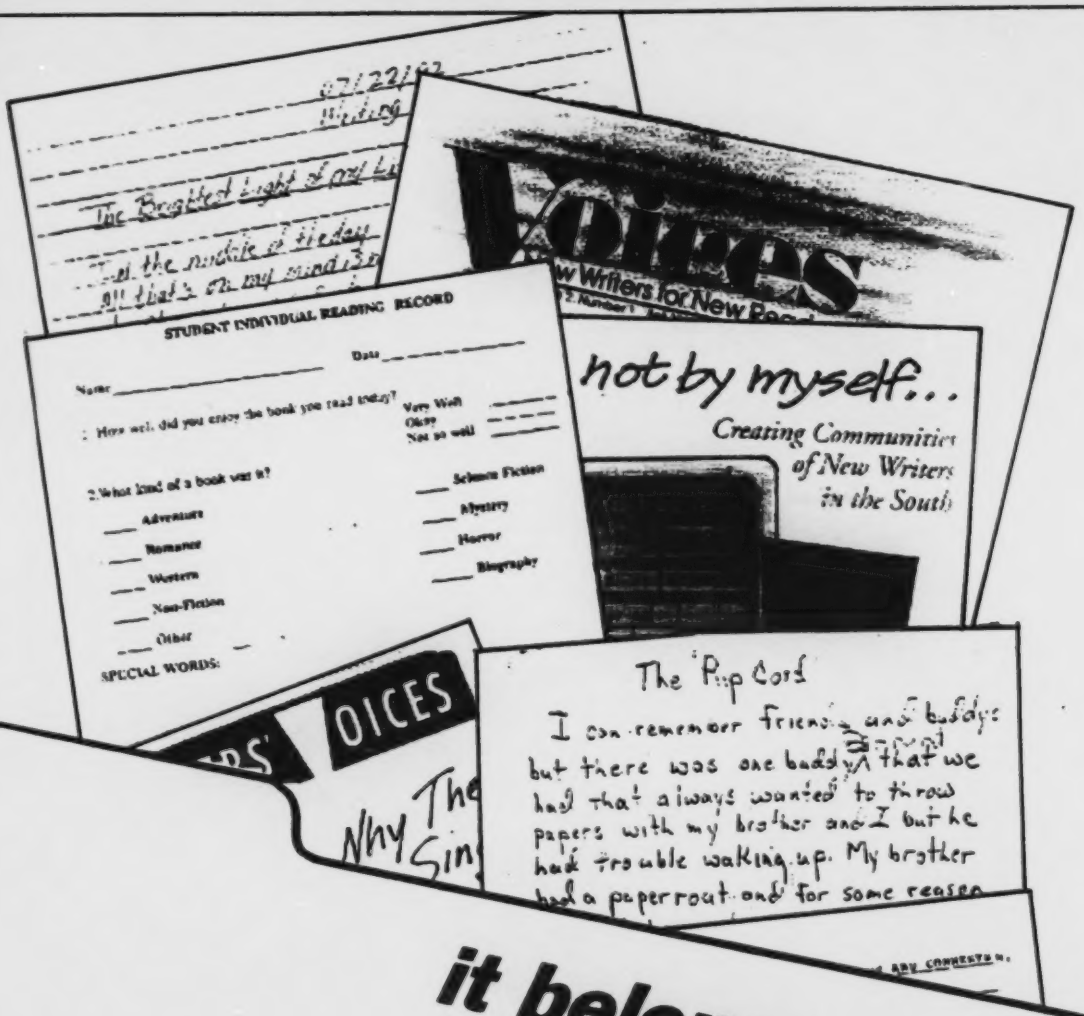

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a guide to portfolio assessment in adult education programs

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CE 063 955

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April, 1993

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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing group of dedicated and creative literacy educators who are breaking new ground in alternative assessment and the use of portfolios. Lorna Irizarry summarizes the sentiments of many of these literacy teachers, volunteers, program administrators and learners who talked to me during this project. They generously contributed their time, talking to me about their work and sharing the tools they have developed. I offer many of their stories in this guide.

This guide is designed to introduce adult literacy educators to the concept of portfolio assessment, and to provide some guidance about how you can incorporate portfolio assessment into your work in adult literacy education. I talked with practitioners from a wide range of program contexts, including libraries; community based organizations; publicly funded programs in public schools, colleges, and community colleges; volunteer organizations; and workplaces. They include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency Preparation (GED) and other types of programs. Educational practices described in this guide are intended to be relevant to this wide range of literacy educators. There are also issues highlighted that are relevant to one specific group, such as those involved in ESOL.

"What I learned from my portfolio is that I've achieved what I wanted. I feel relaxed. It belongs to me. It's for me to know."

Lorna Irizarry, literacy student, New York, NY

I chose to highlight the work of a specific group of practitioners in this guide because their insights complemented each other, their experience covered the range of stages and time periods that seemed most appropriate, their programs cover enough breadth of context and focus to offer something for most readers of this guide, and their approach is most consistent with what appears to be "best practice" as described in the literature. Many of the other practitioners with whom I spoke also reflect these criteria, but their experience so closely resembles the experience of others in the group that it would be redundant to quote them all. It has been inspiring to talk to such a large and diverse group of creative and dedicated educators.

You will see that adult literacy educators are at various stages of developing portfolio assessment in their settings, and we still have many more questions than answers. The quotations contained in "folder" outlines and printed in italics come from my personal conversations with these practitioners and students. They have all reviewed the draft of this guide and consented to the use of their words. With the exception of one of the students who wanted to keep her identity private, every effort was made to ensure accuracy of names and program affiliations. Quotes from printed materials are presented as part of the narrative text, with the appropriate reference information.

In addition to talking to practitioners and students, I conducted an extensive literature review for this project. It yielded references that were drawn almost entirely from public school education, and it was clear that public school researchers' and teachers' experiences have much to offer us. However, the different circumstances in adult literacy and the different characteristics of

adult learners sometimes raise unique issues. Therefore, in this guide, I try to incorporate elementary and secondary school literature in portfolio assessment as appropriate, while exploring our differences. Adult literacy educators whose backgrounds include using portfolio assessment in public schools may be valuable resources for adult literacy programs that want to move into portfolio use. Although the guide could not be field-tested, the draft was reviewed by a number of practitioners who represent the intended audience: literacy practitioners who are interested in portfolio assessment and looking for assistance figuring out how to begin.

What are portfolios?

The term "portfolio" comes from other fields, such as art, in which portfolios are organized collections of work used to present an artist's abilities to someone else. In education, the term "portfolio" means many things these days. Some teachers describe portfolios as folders in which they maintain records of students' test scores and other achievements. Others talk about portfolio assessment as a process through which students analyze their work and present a sample that illustrates particular criteria or judgments about their learning, often in relation to a set of goals. The portfolio assessment process described in this guide focuses on what are called presentation, showcase (Tierney, Carter, Desai, 1991), or assessment portfolios; these are portfolios that contain things drawn from a larger set of materials.

A portfolio is basically a folder. It can be a manila file folder, an accordion folder that extends as work is added to it, a folder kept on a computer disk, or any other type of holder for information. Students often like to decorate their portfolios to give them a more personal feeling. Portfolios are collections as well as containers (see Valencia, McGinley, and Pearson, 1990). The content of portfolios is limited only by our creativity and imagination. For example, Valencia (1990) explains that:

> The range of items to include in a portfolio is almost limitless but may include written responses to reading, reading logs, selected daily work, pieces of writing at various stages of completion, classroom tests, checklists, unit projects, and audio or video tapes, to name a few. **The key is to ensure a variety of types of indicators of learning so that teachers,... students, and administrators can build a complete picture of the student's development. (p. 339; emphasis added)**

Portfolios also can include examples of literacy practices outside of school, such as copies of drivers licenses, copies of the title pages of books that parents read to their children, copies of letters written to friends and family, and examples of math, reading and writing done in church, civic association meetings, or on the job. Portfolios also can include copies of journal pages in which students discuss their learning. The materials in portfolios are drawn from a larger collection of materials that has been kept in folders or other kinds of containers.

What is portfolio assessment?

Portfolio assessment is a process through which the portfolio is created and assessed. Students examine a larger collection of materials and choose some for their portfolios, according to a set of criteria. The portfolios are assessed for progress, examining the process of learning as well as the products. Portfolio assessment can contribute to students' sense of control over their

learning when they play central roles in their portfolios' creation. This is reflected in Paulson, Paulson and Meyer's (1991) definition:

> A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (p. 60)

The teachers whose stories are shared in this guide differ in their use of portfolios; this is to be expected, since portfolio assessment essentially has to be reinvented in every situation. However, they have in common a commitment to portfolios as a process as well as a product, and a meaning-based view of literacy. They also are committed to integrating portfolio assessment and instruction, and see portfolio assessment as a way of helping students increase their sense of control over their education and learning.

Portfolio assessment has four major areas of reflection and decision-making, within each there are a number of steps; this is a cyclical process, however, rather than a linear one. For example, the process begins with reflection on your beliefs about literacy and how those beliefs affect your work with students. Many practitioners find that the process of portfolio assessment provides new insights into learning and teaching, which means that your beliefs may shift over time as you become involved in portfolio assessment. Therefore, while you begin with a period of reflection on your beliefs, you can also expect to return to this area of reflection periodically.

The major periods of reflection and decision-making described in this guide are:

STAGE ONE: Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment.

Portfolio assessment is compatible with instruction that approaches literacy as a process of constructing meaning, in a learner centered way. Assessment that is consistent with that philosophy will be many-faceted; portfolio assessment fits into that larger assessment process.

A. Clarify your beliefs about literacy and their relationship to how you work with students.

Begin the process by reflecting on how you view literacy, what you believe about the purposes of literacy education, and the extent to which you are committed to helping students move into increasing positions of power in relation to their own learning. Although a later period of reflection and decision-making is identified with developing criteria for assessing portfolios, those criteria really begin to be developed during this first time of reflection. Think about how you will know that adults are learning, according to your beliefs about literacy development.

B. Clarify the purposes of assessment, and the relationship between assessment and instruction.

It is essential that instruction and assessment be philosophically consistent. Portfolio assessment is most congruent with whole language, learner centered and participatory approaches to

instruction. It assumes a concern with literacy tasks and practices, and an emphasis on meaning. Portfolio assessment is most effective for examining individual and group development of literacy practices, and for informing instructional and curriculum decisions. It should be only one part of a larger, multifaceted assessment and evaluation process.

C. Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your beliefs about literacy and assessment.

If you find that you support a more skills-based view of literacy, or that you see assessment as dependent on standardized test scores and the judgments of outside experts, then portfolio assessment will not be appropriate for your classroom or program. On the other hand, if you find that portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment, you can proceed to the second set of reflections and decisions.

STAGE TWO: **Plan portfolio assessment.**

A. Decide the areas in which you are going to implement portfolio assessment, and the types of materials you and the learners will collect.

You can begin portfolio assessment on a limited basis, such as focusing only on writing or math, or only on literacy practices in students' daily lives. After you decide the areas in which you will examine progress, you and the learners have to explore the range of things that can be collected in folders that, eventually, become the source for portfolio development.

B. Decide on a schedule for developing portfolios.

Portfolio assessment has to be introduced at the beginning of a term, and developed throughout the semester or quarter. Specific activities have to be integrated into the instructional process on a regular basis, such as journal writing, collecting materials in folders, making audio or video tapes, and maintaining teacher observation notes. Materials can be moved from folders to portfolios at the end of a semester, or they can be moved periodically throughout the term. These decisions have to be made prior to the beginning of instruction, and evaluated and revised each term.

C. Decide on criteria for choosing material to move from folders to portfolios.

Portfolios contain a sample of the materials in folders and journals; the materials are chosen according to a set of criteria that have to be decided by the students and negotiated with teachers. Criteria should relate to the curriculum, and might be based on students' goals or on a broader set of questions such as, "What are your favorite pieces of writing?"

D. Develop a process for moving material from folders to the portfolio.

Students can reflect on their work individually, or they can work in teams to help each other apply their criteria and develop their portfolios. They can write an overview explaining their choices, or they can write notes to accompany each piece. Students can make a presentation to the entire class and they can sit individually with a teacher for a conference assessing their

portfolios. There are many alternatives for moving from folders to portfolios, and you have to begin thinking about the process as part of your planning for the term. As the process develops, you probably will revise your original plans.

E. Develop criteria and a process for assessing portfolios.

Once the portfolios are developed, there has to be some process for assessing their contents. This can involve referring to earlier lists of goals or learning contracts or it can involve the use of checklists developed by the student, the teacher or the program. It can respond to questions posed by students, by teachers, or by both. The criteria for assessment reflects the purposes of assessment and the instructional philosophy. The criteria can examine specific achievements, general progress or process. Students' and teachers' reflections are central to this process. This step requires that teachers let go of the skills-based framework for assessing progress; portfolios will reflect the development of new literacy tasks and practices. Teachers should be careful not to translate those achievements into more familiar lists of skills during this step.

STAGE THREE: **Implement portfolio assessment.**

A. Introduce the concept to your students at the beginning of instruction, if possible.

Portfolio assessment should be introduced as an integral part of instruction, from the very beginning. This means it should be incorporated into orientation for new students (and teachers), and it should be discussed from the first day of instruction. If you are working in an ongoing situation, take the time to talk to your students about the concept and why you are asking them to try something new. It is important to discuss the overall process as well as to begin the specific activities that are involved.

B. Create folders and journals: ways to capture the process and the products of learning.

Folders, journals and other mechanisms can include drafts as well as finished products of work, evidence of new literacy practices, reflections on the process of reading and writing, and other artifacts of literacy development. They also can include teachers' observations of students' behaviors and assessments of students' work. The system used to collect materials will depend on the purposes of assessment, teachers' and programs' goals, and students' goals.

C. Develop criteria for moving materials from folders to portfolios.

Although you have decided on the broad guidelines for the criteria, students have to apply those guidelines to decide on their own individual criteria. For example, if you would like students to develop portfolios that reflect their "best" work, students have to think about what "best" means to them, and how that translates into criteria for choosing pieces from their folders.

D. Move material from folders to portfolios.

Students enjoy decorating their portfolios, personalizing them as part of this process. Many teachers find that choosing pieces for the portfolio takes more time than they had expected.

Make sure to leave enough time for students to reflection on their work and, if possible, to work together with others to make their decisions about what to include in their portfolios.

E. Assess the portfolios.

The criteria for assessment are negotiated between the teacher and the learner, and relate to the curriculum and to students' goals. The process of assessment can involve students, teachers, and, sometimes, people outside the program who have been involved in the literacy practices that students are trying to learn. Assessment results in a narrative evaluation about progress or about the process; it does not translate into grade-level equivalents or other systems that are incompatible with a meaning-based approach to literacy education.

STAGE FOUR: Evaluate the process and revise it for future use.

Reflect on your own experience, and examine the extent to which your goals for assessment were met through this process. Involve students in evaluating the process and examining the extent to which they learned something about their learning as well as skills in assessing their own growth. Talk about the use of time, the clarity of their understanding, and ways they would recommend changing the process the next time. In addition, consult with administrators or others who may need assessment information; to what extent were their needs met and how might the process be improved to be more responsive to their needs? Return to the planning stage and revise your decisions, based on your experience and the new information you have gathered.

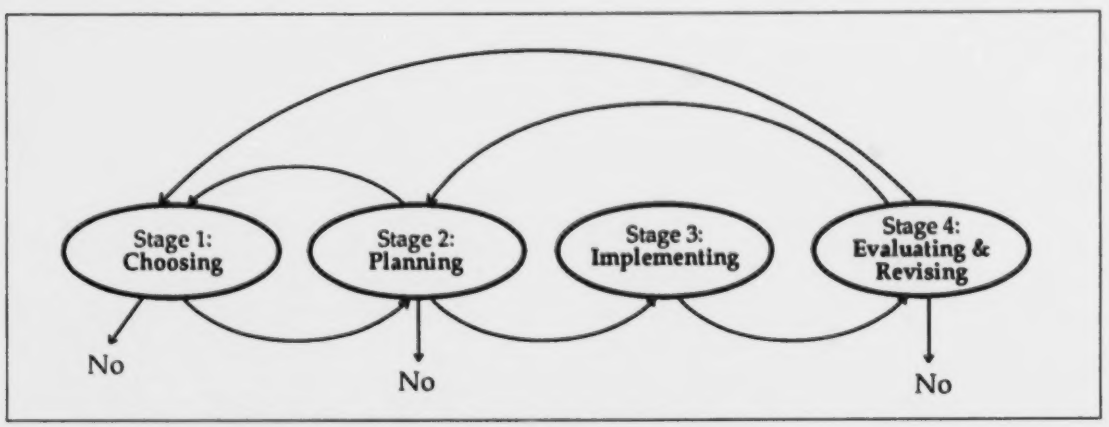

Figure 1: Stages of Portfolio Assessment

Figure 1 illustrates the process. At the stage of Choosing, you may decide to continue to planning, or you may decide not to go forward. At the Planning stage, you may decide to move on to implementation, or you may return to Choosing to reflect more deeply on your philosophy and beliefs. You also may decide that you do not want to proceed. From Implementing it is important to go on to Evaluating and Revising, recognizing that you may decide not to continue with portfolio assessment, based on your experience, or you may return to the stage of Choosing or Planning. The Stages are cyclical, with some evaluation and revision inherent in each stage as well as being a stage by itself.

The rest of this guide goes step by step through the issues involved in each of these four periods of reflection and decision-making. The next section focuses on the process of clarifying your philosophy and approach to instruction, and deciding if portfolio assessment is consistent with your instructional program. The following section looks at the processes of planning and implementing portfolio assessment, highlighting adult literacy educators' and students' experience. This is followed by a discussion of impacts, administrative issues, and recommendations for the field. Sample forms and tools are included in the Appendix, and an annotated bibliography concludes the guide.

Marilyn Collins (1992), a Center Director for Literacy Volunteers of New York City, writes: "In our first year of using portfolios I observed that their potential as an assessment and instructional tool was not self effectuating: the usefulness of portfolios could only be realized over time through encouragement, self discovery and experimentation." I hope this guide helps us support each other in continued experimentation and self-discovery, building on the learning reflected in the practitioners' stories included here.

CHOOSING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Why get involved in portfolio assessment?

"The folders weren't working for anybody; students could feel, 'They're big and fat and full of papers, so I must have been here for a while.' We needed something else."

Shash Woods, teacher, Seattle, WA

People get started in portfolio assessment for a number of reasons. Many are searching for an assessment approach that is philosophically consistent with their instructional program and also reflects their experience. For example, at the Community Learning Center of York College in New York City, the entire staff sat down and took the TABE together to understand their students' experience better. They were deeply disturbed by this experience, and made a commitment to develop an assessment process that was more consistent with their beliefs about literacy and more respectful of their students.

Shash Woods

Shash Woods teaches basic literacy students at Goodwill Literacy in Seattle, Washington. Some of the teachers at Goodwill Literacy are involved in a grant project with Melody Schneider and Mallory Clarke on assessment procedures:

I wanted to try portfolios and the project gave me the kick in the pants so I would do it. I had already been doing a lot of the pieces needed for portfolios: we kept dialog journals, we always kept folders of our materials, and I started reading and writing lists — but without places for people to comment, they were just chronological lists. I was looking for volume, for them to accumulate as many items as possible.

We did projects that created a sense of accomplishment, but it was all kind of fitful, and I think the sense of accomplishment was recognized more by me than by the students. I knew about portfolios, and I actually thought that when I was doing folders, I was doing portfolios. I missed the component of selecting your best work out of a lot of work, and I also missed the component of establishing criteria with your students and I missed the timeline part of it — the sense that, unless you make portfolio-type decisions out of a folder, you're not necessarily looking to measure your progress over time. You just have a big bunch of stuff in a file folder. So really, the folders weren't working for anybody; students could feel, "They're big and fat and full of papers, so I must have been here for a while." We needed something else.

Peggy McGuire

Peggy McGuire is the director of the Germantown Women's Educational Project in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a community-based organization which was started in 1984:

We were started by a group of neighborhood residents, none of whom other than myself had any specific professional training for education. We started by talking to women in the neighborhood and asking them what they needed, and it was pretty clear from the outset that what they needed was an alternative to the traditional educational systems that had failed them in various ways. We saw ourselves from the beginning as a community based organization and part of our mission was building up our community. So from the very beginning we talked about focusing on individual people, what they needed individually and what they needed as a community.

I had come out of teaching writing at Temple University. I knew how useful it was to conference with individual people about their writing, instead of doing a lot of lectures. I spent a lot of time working on individuals' writing, and seeing growth and change by looking at writing from the beginning to whatever point we were at. I knew that that was a valuable way of assessing people's changes and people's growth. And so I brought that experience with me when we were dreaming up this program. And because of the way we started and the way we've been funded, we've had an incredible amount of flexibility; from the very beginning we were able to try out things and see how they worked. And if they didn't work, throw them out and try something different.

The whole idea of assessment comes out of my experience of feeling like standardized testing never really told me what I needed to know about individual people in order to work with them effectively. I've always had a lot of mistrust about standardized testing. I've also seen that if people were able to talk together and people were able to build up a pattern of work that they could look at, that they were going to be able to identify their own needs as well as their own growth. The actual term portfolio assessment only started getting used by us a couple of years ago when our staff started participating in the Adult Literacy Practitioners Inquiry Project with Susan Lytle at the University of Pennsylvania. A lot of my experience has been that I've been doing things that I didn't have a name for!

Karen Griswold

Karen Griswold teaches adult basic education at the Institute for Literacy at Lehman College in New York City:

When I work with students, I see changes in writing skills — like text getting longer — but that progress is not recorded by the tests we used — the measures just don't show learning that I see. My concern seemed to be widespread, shared by the other teachers and students. We wanted to keep better track of changes.

What are the major philosophical ways of viewing literacy?

Portfolio assessment is appealing when it is consistent with your instructional philosophy and theoretical approach to literacy.

STAGE ONE: **Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment.**

The first step provides an opportunity to clarify your philosophy, including your beliefs about the nature of literacy and literacy development as well as your orientation to the purposes of literacy education. These beliefs have an impact on how you work with students.

Melody Schneider

Melody Schneider teaches ABE at Seattle Central Community College and is a state consultant and staff development specialist in Seattle, WA:

When I talked with one program about, "What do you want to assess," they said, "We don't even know what we teach!" And so they went through this whole process about what they're teaching at different levels and why and what that means. It's been a very important process for them, and it came out of the process of thinking about assessment.

You need some kind of framework for analyzing your practice. Lytle and Wolfe (1989) provide one possible framework. They explain that literacy can be viewed as the accumulation of a set of skills, as the ability to do particular tasks, as the capacity to engage in specific cultural and social practices, or as the ability to participate in a process of critical reflection and action. These four conceptions build on each other.

The view of *literacy as skills* continues to permeate literacy education. In this view, literacy is seen as a set of discrete skills that exist regardless of context. This conception of literacy leads to focusing on simple encoding and decoding skills: "sounding out" words and studying lists of letter sounds, syllable sounds, and words in isolation. In the skills model, adults are told that they must learn "general" literacy skills first, and then they can use those skills to learn content or other kinds of skills. Skills-based instruction assumes that students will accumulate skills up to a certain point and then will automatically be able to use those skills to accomplish tasks in their lives.

Literacy is seen as tasks when literacy is viewed as the ability to accomplish something such as reading a bus schedule or filling in a form independently. However, this approach does not take into account the situation in which someone does the task; in other words, we assume that filling in an application form in literacy class is the same task as filling in that form in the personnel office. Task-oriented instruction tends to assume that students will automatically transfer whatever they learn to do in class into their lives.

Many literacy students find that literacy *tasks* change in different situations; for example, using their cultural knowledge, they fill in the form for the welfare system somewhat differently than the form applying for credit to buy a new couch. Or their nervousness in line at the bank makes filling in the application for a checking account a different task than it was while sitting in class the evening before. When we place literacy tasks in their social and cultural settings, we understand more about *literacy as social and cultural practices.* Instruction oriented to literacy as practices brings the program to the community, helping students use new skills to accomplish tasks in their social situations. It also emphasizes the fact that students construct the meaning of the text in each situation.

A healthy democracy depends on citizens who are able to use information critically; they are able to uncover underlying biases, assumptions, beliefs, and contradictions in text and to use their own experience and cultural knowledge to interpret the meaning of texts. Their critical analysis may lead to some kind of action, such as writing letters, doing additional reading, attending a school board meeting, and so on. Literacy education that helps new readers learn how to ask such questions and become involved in social action is oriented to *literacy as critical reflection and action.* Literacy is seen as a means for adults to challenge the traditional distribution of knowledge and power in their communities and in the larger society.

These four conceptions of literacy can build on each other. Skills are incorporated into literacy tasks. Instruction in tasks, such as check writing, includes attention to skills such as vowel sounds. However, the purpose of literacy has to do with meaning and using skills to accomplish a task, rather than skills being viewed as ends in themselves. Likewise, instruction in literacy practices includes attention to specific tasks which, in turn, incorporates attention to specific skills. But skills are taught in the context of tasks and practices rather than in the abstract, and tasks are addressed in the context of social and cultural settings rather than only on workbook pages. Instruction that addresses literacy as critical reflection and action incorporates instruction in skills, tasks and practices. However, the meanings associated with the text are treated as problematical rather than as given; students learn to ask another level of critical questions as they learn to write out the check or to spell the numbers.

Many literacy practitioners agree that the view of literacy as tasks and practices is most consistent with cognitive science research findings. When literacy is addressed as tasks, practices, or critical reflection and action, then reading, writing, speaking and listening are interwoven. When the separate aspects of literacy are interrelated and transactive, it is also known as *whole language* literacy instruction — teaching and learning focus on real reading and real writing tasks and practices, reflecting the ways language is used in students' lives (Goodman, 1989). Teachers do not isolate reading from writing, and learners' experiences, culture and goals are at the center of the teaching and learning process. A whole language approach to literacy development emphasizes the process through which each person constructs the meaning of the text, using his or her cultural and experiential background as well as technical knowledge of reading and writing.

Power and the purpose of literacy education

When we were in school as children, most of us were not consulted very often about what we were taught, how we were taught, or the content used for instruction. As adult educators we remember that, and we have to struggle to move beyond those experiences to imagine education

in which teachers and students work together, with mutual respect. Many adult literacy practitioners are involving students in planning and conducting instruction and, sometimes, in program management as well.

Learner centered literacy work places students' experiences, culture and goals at the center of instruction. It requires that students are active participants in creating curriculum and making decisions about instruction, since teachers cannot know about learners' culture, experiences and goals unless they engage students in an ongoing conversation. It incorporates recent cognitive science findings (Sticht and McDonald, 1989) by emphasizing the importance of meaning and students' background knowledge, and it is consistent with a whole language approach to instruction. Learner centered literacy programs often approach literacy as tasks and practices.

Programs in which students share the power and responsibility for developing the curriculum, delivering instruction and organizing and managing the program are considered to be more participatory (see Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). They move beyond learner-centered instruction's orientation to meaning and culture to incorporate student participation in other program dimensions, and to explicitly deal with power relationships. Participatory literacy programs have been slow to develop partly due to our deeply internalized negative stereotypes of adults with low literacy abilities (see Beder, 1991; Fingeret and Jurmo, 1989).

Literacy programs oriented to skill development, learning to accomplish specific tasks in the classroom, and developing the ability to participate in new literacy practices in the community usually are oriented to individual change; this includes most learner centered and participatory programs as well. These programs try to help individuals fit into mainstream society and to succeed in employment, schooling, parenting, and other arenas in ways that are defined by the mainstream society. Literacy educators in these *individually oriented* programs (Fingeret, 1984) talk about empowerment for individuals, or helping persons feel an enhanced sense of control over their lives. Instruction may address tasks and practices that lead to social mobility, such as preparing for a higher paying job. However, such programs do not address the larger social issues such as the fact that learners may need to move in order to find new employment, leaving their communities behind, for example.

A much smaller group of literacy programs is focused on social action and is concerned with helping literacy students develop skills that serve larger purposes of community development and social change. These *community-oriented* programs (Fingeret, 1984) tend to approach literacy as practices and as critical reflection and action; their curriculum reflects the community residents' concerns, such as jobs, housing, child care, transportation, care for the elderly and crime, and emphasizes collective action as well as individual empowerment (see Auerbach, 1992).

Your decision to engage in portfolio assessment depends on how you view literacy, what you believe about the purposes of literacy education, and the extent to which you are committed to helping students move into increasing positions of power in relation to their own learning. Portfolios are consistent with whole language and learner centered philosophies; they also promote participatory practices. They can be developed to support individual or community development. The approach to portfolios that is promoted in this guide is consistent with shifting power to students, sharing power and responsibility for assessment between teachers and learners.

Anne Lawrence

Anne Lawrence is the coordinator of Basic Education Staff Development for the City University of New York Adult Literacy Program which includes publicly funded literacy and ESOL programs on 14 campuses. She helps teachers learn how to do portfolio assessment:

It's empowering to students, and that's what I emphasize, how a portfolio helps students become independent learners and take responsibility for assessing their own work. Often teachers ask me, "What goes into portfolios?" And I say, "People can include reactions to the books they're reading, and maybe they can include their favorite pieces of writing, or a piece that shows how much they've progressed. Still others include a copy of a driver's license or something else they've accomplished outside of class." Some teachers have responded, "Well, my students don't really read books and write pieces." So this is a problem. If instruction is skills-based and teacher-centered, I feel portfolio assessment loses much of its impact.

Loren McGrail

Loren McGrail gives workshops on learner centered approaches to assessment throughout New England:

In one workshop, a program that had identified itself as using portfolios admitted after looking at the variety of dimensions of literacy that they realized that they had only been looking at performance as related to performing tasks in the classroom. They had no data on how learners use literacy in their daily lives or how learners approached these tasks.

Assessment purposes and models

While you are thinking about how adults learn and the nature of literacy, it is natural to think about how you and they will know that they have learned: assessment. Therefore, the second step centers around **clarifying the purposes of assessment, and the relationship between assessment and instruction.** If assessment is to provide specific information for a funder, you may not have much choice about method; some states and cities require that all of their funded programs administer the TABE, for example. These test scores can be kept in separate administrative files and discussed with students. However, assessment can provide information for you and learners about progress in relation to specific goals and can help you improve instruction. In these

instances, it is essential that instruction and assessment be philosophically consistent. For example, an adult basic education program that approaches literacy as practices may help learners meet goals such as reading to their children, filling in job applications, writing letters to relatives, and analyzing leases and contracts. Students' ability to engage in these literacy practices will not be reflected on a test that approaches literacy as skills and asks for the main idea at the end of a passage.

Wrigley and Guth (1992) present two broad categories of assessment. The first group is "General assessment, such as standardized tests, that are designed to measure achievement, knowledge, and skills of large groups of students across programs and are said to have content validity" (p. 133). The second group is, "program-based assessments, that reflect the educational approach and literacy curriculum of a particular program and thus have both content validity and curriculum validity" (p. 133). This approach to assessment measures what the program is actually trying to help adults learn.

Many literacy programs engage in *general assessment*, and often depend upon standardized tests as a sole assessment measure. Standardized tests are easy to administer to groups of students, they require minimal training on the part of teachers, they provide information that can be aggregated easily and they can place students in relation to their own prior performance and in relation to other students' performance (Ehringhaus 1991; D'Amico-Samuels, 1991).

However, standardized tests also present major problems. First, no single measure can adequately assess the process and range of outcomes of participation in literacy education. The practice of using standardized tests as a sole assessment measure is problematic in itself. In addition, the nature of standardization is in conflict with literacy education that defines literacy as practices and critical reflection and action. It does not allow for literacy as a process of constructing meaning, but rather tests whether an adult performs tasks in ways that are consistent with norms (Ehringhaus, 1991). Fingeret and Danin (1991) studied the impact of participation for students in Literacy Volunteers of New York City, a whole language literacy program. They find that there is no predictable relationship between standardized test scores and learning that is clearly shown through performance in activities such as writing and reading. Farr and Carey (1986), writing on reading measurement for the International Reading Association, explain that,

> One of the major problems with the multiple choice format is the insistence on a single correct answer. Recent research has emphasized that reading comprehension is a constructive process and that meaning is as dependent on the reader as it is on the test. Thus, the single correct answer format provides a dilemma for authors of multiple choice tests. Even if a particular answer is agreed upon by a committee of experts, the possibility exists that a creative reader is capable of going beyond conventional implications of the passage to infer a response that is incorrect when measured against the single response anticipated and allowed. (p. 34)

Standardized tests also do not distinguish among language, literacy and culture; when a student gets an item wrong, we do not know if that is due to lack of knowledge of English, lack of familiarity with cultural material, or problems with reading and writing (Wrigley and Guth, 1992). Standardized tests place the authority for judging progress outside the learner and teacher, sometimes undermining teachers' and learners' efforts to take more control over the instructional

process. Ehringhaus (1991) cautions:

> An emphasis on standardized testing trivializes the broader goals of assessment and permits — or encourages — easily measurable objectives even when they are restrictive and do not represent learners' goals. (p. 153.)

Standardized tests also reinforce the message that literacy is an individual act that depends on individual skill attainment, rather than viewing literacy as a social practice that reflects the collaborative nature of life and learning. They do not reflect development of practices, as Rickard, et al., (1991) explain: "Test results typically attempt to reveal what learners know or what they can do, rather than how they will use that they know" (p. 10).

There are additional problems using standardized testing with ESOL literacy students. Standardized tests fail to place literacy in its social context. Also, Wrigley and Guth (1992) explain:

> Most standardized tests fail to take into account the wide range of literacy practices in which learners engage in their mother tongues. By disregarding the biliteracy aspect of ESOL literacy, they give the impression that literacy in English is the only literacy that counts and deprive programs of valuable information about learners' past experiences with literacy. (p. 136)

Jean Brown

Jean Brown, a literacy student:

We take tests at the beginning and end of the term. I never really wanted to see how I did when I took tests. But with a portfolio, you pick out what you think is good. I like looking at it. When you look back at your work, you can see where you was then and where you are now. But I hate tests. You get really nervous and what you do know, you go blank, you know that you know it, but you can't do it on the test. They don't really tell you what you know and what you don't know.

Lorna Irizarry

Lorna Irizarry, a literacy student:

Tests make me nervous. Sometimes I do good and sometimes I don't — it depends on how the day is. What I learn from my portfolio is that I've achieved what I wanted. I feel relaxed. It belongs to me. It's for me to know. On tests it feels like somebody is looking over my shoulder, there's somebody behind me, checking on me, watching a clock. I feel nervous, pressured. It's not mine.

Program-based assessment is responsive to a program's instructional approach and a learner's goals. Lytle, et. al. (1989) and Lytle and Schultz (1989) provide one framework for thinking about this approach to assessment. Their scheme includes four dimensions of literacy learning: practices, strategies and interests, perceptions, and goals.

- The dimension of **practices** focuses on how learners use literacy in their daily lives.
- **Strategies and interests** focuses on the learners' ways of approaching literacy practices and tasks.
- The **perceptions** category looks at what learners believe about how they learn and their theories of literacy.
- And students set their own priorities for learning in the **goals** category.

Figure 2 summarizes these four dimensions; they provide a broad framework for assessment.

Figure 2. Design for Assessment in ALEP: the Adult Literacy Evaluation Project.

Dimension of Assessment Procedures	Purposes: Learner and Program	Processes	Criteria for Assessing Change
Literacy practices: role of literacy/ learning in everyday life	To describe contexts and practices	Discuss uses in home, community, workplace, and so on.	Frequency and variety in types of participation in literacy-related events
Reading, writing, and learning strategies and interests	To provide an opportunity to display and take risks in displaying reading and writing repertoire	Construct and analyze portfolio of literacy activities; range of reading and writing texts and tasks	More efficient and effective use of a wider range of strategies
Perceptions of reading and writing, teaching and learning	To understand adults' histories of reading and writing, teaching and learning; knowledge of processes, strategies, texts, and tasks	Discuss perceptions in general and in relation to specific activities	Changes in knowledge about reading and writing processes, strategies, texts and tasks
Goals	To identify current abilities and interests and set priorities for learning	Discuss and complete checklist of goals (home and family, social and business, personal and job-related)	Demonstration of competence at self-selected tasks related to goals; setting new goals; reassessing previous goals; changing priorities

Source: Lytle and Schultz, 1989

This framework illustrates that assessment includes examining change in students' ways of thinking about literacy as well as assessing the extent to which students can use new skills to accomplish new literacy practices in their lives. The assessment processes include discussion as well as completion of various reading and writing tasks. Goals are viewed as dynamic, changing as learners change and reflecting practices rather than skills; this framework helps us to see the kinds of activities in which students can participate as part of the assessment process. The information collected in this assessment process is "authentic" in that it reflects the ways in which students are actually engaging in literacy practices (Meyer, 1992). Since literacy practices and goals vary from student to student, evidence of performance will vary as well. You can make your own chart of procedures, purposes, processes and criteria.

Assessment is ongoing, and it includes assessing students' skills and interests when they first come to a program, assessing learning in a continuous way, and conducting some kind of summative assessment at the end of predetermined periods such as semesters or the program year. Portfolio assessment can address all of these stages except for the initial assessment; materials from that process can be included in the portfolio, however, and reflected upon periodically. Portfolio assessment can be used to examine practices, strategies, perceptions and goals, depending on the materials collected and the questions used for assessing them.

Participatory literacy programs require participatory approaches to assessment. This requires that students and teachers work together to assess change in the categories above. Lytle and Wolfe explain that, "Participatory assessment... necessitates a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts, and contexts of assessment, as well as in judging its outcomes" (p. 52). Approaches to participatory assessment share an emphasis on communication between teachers and students, shared control over the assessment process, and multiple indicators of students' learning and growth. They also assume that students' goals, experiences and perceptions of literacy influence the learning process (Lytle et al, 1989). In addition, participatory assessment respects teachers and learners' judgments about learning and growth. McGrail (1992b) explains:

> A participatory approach to assessment, like a participatory curriculum process, must start with valuing what learners want and need literacy for. Starting with learners' goals, needs, and interests does not mean programs have to abdicate their own goals. It is a process of negotiation. What has been missing in most traditional forms of learner assessment is even asking the question. (p. vii)

Melody Schneider

In training, I ask teachers to think about their own experiences as learners, like learning to drive, or learning geometry, any kind of situation in which they've been a learner, and how do they know they've learned something? Then I ask them to think about how they get that information across — if I've learned how to drive a car, how do I share that with the world? Is it only my driving test? Is it the first time I drive in bad weather? Is it that I run around and tell people? and then, what are people's reactions? I want teachers to start

Melody Schneider
(cont.)

thinking about the fact that if I say I've learned something or I know something, most of the time people will say, "That's great!" I can just tell people I've learned something new, like in knitting, and they'll accept it. Some of my knitting friends will say, "Can you show me how to do it?" but no one says, "Can you prove it?" There's an acceptance about my saying that I know something. I think that if teachers can start seeing themselves as learners more, they'll see that there's a legitimacy we give to each other that we may not give to our students. I think we should try to give that legitimacy to our students.

So then we talk about how we know that our students have learned, and teachers say things like, "You can see the light bulb go on in their eyes," or "You can see them get excited," or "I hear them do something new." Teachers say, "We talk about it." And those are all assessment. So we talk about what kinds of tools we could use to document this, if we wanted to document it. And we talk about what to document, what is important, what is literacy, anyway? **What we document depends on what we think people need to learn.**

It is important to take the time to **assess the relationship between portfolio assessment and your beliefs about literacy, instruction and assessment.** Portfolio assessment can provide a mechanism for students to learn to assess their own progress and to take more control of the evaluation process. It provides in-depth insights into students' learning and their relationship to instruction. It will not provide scores that allow students to be compared with each other, with norms, or across programs, however. It also will not yield information appropriate to skills-based instruction. If you find that portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment, you can proceed to the second set of reflections and decisions. On the other hand, if you find that you support a more skills-based or expert-oriented approach to literacy instruction and assessment, then portfolios will not be an appropriate approach to assessment for you.

PLANNING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

"Start out really simple.... Start where the people are really excited."

Jean Fargo, assessment specialist, New York, NY

Portfolio assessment affects the entire instructional process. Therefore, it is important to take the time to engage in a planning process.

STAGE TWO: Plan portfolio assessment.

If your entire program is implementing portfolio assessment, try to organize staff development sessions in which you and your colleagues share insights from the literature, compare experiences, and arrange for visiting each other's classes or responding to each other's portfolios. If you are implementing portfolio assessment within a program in which it is not a program policy, find other teachers to try it with you so you are not isolated and can learn from each other.

Anne Lawrence

Reflecting on my own experience, the fact that I met with four other staff members on a regular basis was extremely helpful. It kept us motivated and kept the momentum going of the pilot project. For example, when I was totally discouraged and thought it wasn't working at all, someone would make a suggestion, or commiserate, and I'd be ready to go back and try again. Support is really important when you're piloting portfolio assessment.

Some teachers begin by keeping their own portfolios as a natural part of their professional development process of learning about instruction, assessment and portfolios. Ford and Ohlhausen (1991) provide evidence that keeping their own portfolios was a critical factor for public school teachers in teacher education courses becoming more confident about using portfolios in their teaching. Graves (1992) attests, "Maintaining our own portfolios has contributed more to our understanding of their possibilities and use than virtually any other aspect of our work with them" (p. 5).

Diane Rosenthal

Diane Rosenthal, director of the NY Public Library's Centers for Reading and Writing, was part of a task group of teachers and administrators Centers for Reading and Writing who came together out of an interest in learning more about portfolio assessment and its potential within the context of their adult literacy program.

Diane Rosenthal
(cont.)

As a group, we began identifying questions, We met weekly to learn more about portfolios, and designed a learning plan for ourselves. We began to read and discuss articles, and to keep our own reading and writing portfolios. We talked about the experience and why we picked certain pieces for the portfolios. We were adamant that students needed to be involved in the process of developing criteria for what goes into their portfolios, and we felt we had to experience the process also.

Anne Lawrence

I've learned from learning about teaching writing that it's important for people to write to learn about teaching writing, so I've attempted to keep my own reading and writing folders and to do my own portfolio, so I would have a sense of what the process of portfolio assessment was like and what were some of the problems. One of the problems I had was keeping up my reading and writing folder. How did I expect students to if I couldn't? So maintaining our folders became part of our regular class routine.

Keeping my portfolio made me more aware of the changes in my reading and writing. I was surprised by how much more conscious of my process I became. So, besides helping you learn about portfolio assessment, keeping your own portfolio brings you a lot closer to your own process and to your own reading and writing so you can model and share that with the students. Just like I think it's important for teachers to be reading and writing in the classroom, I think they should also be doing their own portfolio.

Decide on the focus for portfolio assessment and the process for collecting materials.

The first step in planning is to **decide the areas in which you are going to implement portfolio assessment, and the types of materials you and the learners will collect.** Remember that you can start with one area, such as writing or math, as a pilot, and then expand into other areas. You will begin by developing folders, and then develop a process for moving material from folders to the portfolio.

Jean Fargo

Jean Fargo is responsible for assessment at Literacy Volunteers of New York City, a large volunteer literacy program. She has learned from experience:

Start out really simple. As we began our work with portfolios, we realized it was unrealistic to start with a complete assessment package, particularly one that would try to meet the needs of all the stakeholders in our program and one that would have all the components worked out in advance. We decided to initiate a plan that was fairly easy to implement and that would be most immediately useful for tutors, students, and staff.

This plan involved students keeping folders of writing samples and logs of the reading and writing they do both inside and outside the program. These are reviewed periodically. Through this experience, which has been supervised by the learning center directors, we are discovering how to take the next steps that can inform overall program evaluation.

Decisions about what information to keep depend on your situation, and what you and your students want to learn. You will eventually examine the information in journals and folders in order to answer questions — your questions and your students' questions — about learning and teaching. Since each situation is different, and everyone has slightly different questions, portfolio assessment looks a little different in every situation. Students who are involved in computer assisted instruction (CAI) may want to keep copies of their CAI records in their portfolios, but these cannot stand alone as evidence of learning. They must be accompanied by examples of actual practices and tasks involving the skills and tasks being taught through CAI.

Melody Schneider

There are some basic structures — you can keep lists, you can keep writing samples, you can do little evaluations of projects you're doing, you can have interviews, students can write in journals about what they think they've learned that day, teachers can keep observation journals of the day. But then teachers, depending on their own system, and other factors like who they're accountable to, and what kinds of things they have to record, they create their own variations on these themes. Like one program wants to see if there's a correlation between self esteem and attitude improvement and actual reading and writing improvement, so they're working on, "How will we record this to see if this comes up?"

Folders (or other mechanisms) have to capture both the process and the products of learning. These can include dialog journals, writing folders, reading lists, audio and video tapes, and other kinds of checklists (see McGrail, 1991, 1992a; McGrail and Purdom, 1992). Writing is most often discussed in the literature, but folders can be developed for reading, math, and other

areas of learning (see Schmitt and Jones, 1992, for discussion of math). Jonker (1993) describes this level of collection as a "scrapbook," recognizing that adults may want to include many types of evidence of participation in new literacy practices outside of class, such as copies of menus, a driver's license, application forms that have been filled out, and letters to children's teachers.

Dialog journals differ from regular journals in that they take the form of a conversation between two or more persons who are writing and responding to each other, rather than simply being an internal dialog. When students write in dialog journals, you or other students respond to their thoughts, keeping a conversation going in writing. This reinforces the idea of writing as a process of communicating meaning, and it provides another channel for sharing thoughts and ideas.

Loren McGrail

In the Family Literacy Project, Rosario had a class journal— IN and OUT. Students wrote their own accomplishments for inside the classroom and outside.

Writing folders include dated drafts of students' writing as well as finished pieces, so that you and they can analyze progress over time. Reading folders can contain photocopied copies of title pages from books students have read, checklists of reading that is in progress or completed, and written comments on reading. Some students develop folders to archive their work learning mathematics, or folders that reflect other goal areas. Audio and video tapes can help to document progress learning oral language skills, group participation, leadership, or other interactive abilities for which there is no written record.

It is important that students are responsible for maintaining their folders, since this begins the process of helping students learn to take responsibility for assessment; it may not be easy, however.

Melody Schneider

The first thing is just to keep everything in folders. A lot of teachers don't do that, or they keep the folders instead of letting the students take care of their own work. Teachers sometimes need help getting away from being in total control of assessment and evaluation. They have to turn that over, bit by bit, first by letting students keep their folders and help them - remind them to keep things in them — because some students like to take their stuff home all the time and others like to leave it. Just letting go of control, and then understanding that it's a lengthy process, and to give it time.

Program-based assessment usually begins with a conversation between you and your students in which the learners talk about their goals, interests, skills, and backgrounds. This becomes the beginning of an ongoing conversation in which you and the learners discuss learning, progress toward goals, and the direction of instruction (see, for examples, Auerbach, 1992; Lytle, et al, 1989). Some teachers develop learning contracts during this period or ask students to complete goals checklists (see examples in the Appendix). Goals can be drawn from any area of students' lives, or they may focus on a specific domain. It is important to help students focus their goals on practices — things they want to do in their daily lives, using their developing skills. Too often, students are used to focusing on skills rather than how they want to use skills to accomplish new practices in their lives. Whenever possible, goals should identify the social setting as well as the task students want to learn. Goals and learning contracts can be included in portfolios and can become the basis for decisions about which materials are included.

It is also important that you **keep records of your observations of students' work and behavior**; your systematic observations complement students' self-assessment information. Your instructional philosophy and goals guide your observations. Taylor (1990) provides some guidance for recording observations that a number of teachers have found useful. They particularly mention using yellow sticky notes to jot down quick comments about students, later placing them in a set of teachers' folders on each student.

Karen Griswold

Karen Griswold, Lehman College literacy program, New York:

A few years ago I heard Denny Taylor talking about different ways of observing, and I adapted her system, using post-it notes to write down different things I observed about students in class. I put them in students' folders, and I'd look through them every once in a while. I didn't push it as far as ideally I'd like, but I liked Denny Taylor's system — it's formal but informal. There are notes, but she's realistic about what you can do when you're teaching a class. It's OK to write just 3 or 4 notes a class. I found that I ended up noticing a lot and collecting a lot; it makes you a better observer over time. You don't get everything down, but you get more by making it more systematic.

Loren McGrail

I used a tape recorder to talk into after class. There was no time for even post-its. I could talk and clean the room at the same time. Then I would listen to the tape every two weeks or so during prep time.

Decide on a schedule for engaging in portfolio development.

The second planning step is to decide on the schedule for reviewing folders and developing portfolios. Some teachers are trying to integrate assessment into instruction. Whenever the individual or the group finishes reading or writing something, they stop to think about the process. In addition, students are asked to review their folders on a regular basis throughout the term. Sometimes students create their portfolios bit by bit through the term as well, with a final review and presentation at the end. Zessoules and Gardner (1991) explain:

> Authentic assessment involves a complicated reevaluation of classroom activities and responsibilities, transforming the classroom along many dimensions: changing the kinds of activities students engage in on a daily basis, altering the responsibilities of students and teachers in increasingly sophisticated ways, and transforming the static, mechanical, and disengaging moments when learning stops and testing begins into a continuum of moments that combine assessment, instruction, and learning. By integrating assessment into the day-to-day classroom experience, one changes its role dynamically. **No longer a weapon for rooting out and combating students' weaknesses, assessment becomes an additional occasion for learning** — a tool for students, as much as for teachers, parents, and administrators to discover strengths, possibilities, and future directions in students' work. In this way students are actively involved in an ongoing, educational process, capitalizing on the processes of authentic assessment to move forward in their work as active learners. (p. 63; emphasis added)

Integrating assessment and instruction means that you and the students are constantly moving back and forth between doing work and reflecting on the process and the product. The result of those reflections has to feed back into teaching and learning.

Each of these pieces is difficult. We are used to separating teaching and assessment. Using portfolios requires understanding that the assessment process actually yields important learning; instruction and assessment are seen as different aspects of a unified learning process. Students are used to other people — or tests — telling them how well they are doing. The reflection process requires trusting their own judgments and their own knowledge from experience. And the process of reflection on the materials in folders yields rich insights into students' perspectives about their own learning, goals and backgrounds that has direct implications for instruction; it is often not clear how to use that information, however. It easily can begin to feel like you have more information than you or the students can deal with productively; the process must be developed over time.

Many teachers begin portfolio assessment by developing folders throughout the semester or quarter, and then reviewing them to create portfolios only at the end of the term. This creates problems; often the quantity of work to be reviewed is overwhelming, students have not developed the analysis skills they need to engage in the process, and students continue to think that assessment is something that happens only at the end of the term.

Diane Rosenthal

Diane Rosenthal's first experience with students reviewing their folders was surprising for her:

For some students it was a very positive experience, for others there was a lot of pain. We were surprised; we expected it to be a very positive experience. Some felt nothing was yet the piece they wanted to write. They didn't see the kind of learning yet that they wanted. If assessment is part of instruction, it would address these issues in a more continuous and organic way, rather than seeing assessment as something that happens at an interval.

We set time aside every other session where there would be some kind of reflection. They were writing about process, about the piece they'd just finished, or how they were doing. At a certain point we had to back off — students didn't want to do this one out of every two sessions, they got bored after a while. Any assessment can become as entrenched and formulaic as a test.

Karen Griswold

It can take students a long time to learn the value of spending a lot of time on assessment. They ask, "Why are we taking time to look back over what we've written instead of writing more?" Students have to experiment and maybe they'll be convinced and maybe they won't. To make the assessment/instruction integration, I begin with "assessment activities." Then I move to a place where it's not clear what's assessment and what's instruction. It's good to mark assessment as an activity at first; students realize you're doing something differently than you ordinarily do.

Decide on the criteria for moving from folders to portfolios.

Portfolios contain a sampling from folders, journals and other sources. The third step in developing portfolios is to **decide on the criteria for choosing and moving material from folders to portfolios.** Criteria often are derived from students' goals and from the instructional philosophy; students should have a major role in deciding on these criteria. Then materials in the folders, dialog journals and other sources must be examined for their relationship to the criteria, and decisions must be made about what to move into the portfolio. Sometimes the criteria are left fluid, with students being asked to pick their "best" or their "favorite" pieces. At other times, portfolios are created to show evidence of progress toward specific goals, such as ways in which students have developed their ability to budget and shop, to identify job openings and fill in applications, or to read to their children. It is important to think about the criteria during the planning process, since you may have to build some activities into the early part of instruction, such as goal-setting, to support portfolio development later in the term.

Develop a process for moving from folders to portfolios.

The fourth step is to **develop a process for moving from folders to portfolios.** Students can work individually or collaboratively to reflect on the work in their folders and make choices for their portfolios. It is important to think about this process during planning, since you may want to begin developing small groups or pairs working collaboratively early in the year to prepare students for assessment activities. Students also often need assistance reflecting on and analyzing the work in their folders; the planning stage provides the opportunity for developing questions and other ways to help students develop these analysis skills.

Teachers often ask students to write short notes explaining their choices for the portfolio. For example, Melody Schneider's class decided that they would move work from their folders to their portfolios if it represented themselves as learners at that time. She asked them to respond to three questions about each piece:

1) Why do you like/dislike this piece of work?

2) What did you learn from doing it?

3) Why is this your "best" piece?

She also asked students to write about their education in general and how they were meeting their goals. These pieces of writing were included in their portfolios and the portfolios were then shared with each other. Other teachers ask students to write about how they wrote a piece or became involved in a project, or to assess how this piece of writing or reading is somehow different than what the student would or could have done previously (see the Appendix for more examples). The questions depend on the criteria and the uses of the portfolios.

Shash Woods

I suppose in a way the book we published was a portfolio, but in that case, I think I put those yellow sticky notes on two or three of their pieces of writing in their journals and asked the person to pick their favorite of those two or three, so I still didn't turn over the controls over standards to the students. I pre-selected for them.

The whole thing about making independent learners is giving people control of evaluating, of setting their own standards and monitoring and measuring their own progress against their own standards, because that's a really big missing piece in the education of people who come here. Any sort of economic success or social success is really going to be hinged on being able to decipher for yourself whether you're being treated fairly, whether you have more options, whether when somebody tells you made a mistake you really did, or whether you should give up a tack you're taking on something because it's wrong for you or whether you should see something as a temporary setback. Before doing portfolios, they had accumulated accomplishments but they didn't decide for themselves what was best or worst or what constituted progress, or what was worth learning, in a sense.

Karen Griswold

You need a separate folder for the portfolio — writing folders get huge, and the folder is a source. You have to pull out a smaller number of things for the portfolio fairly regularly. You need to play around with it. At first it's an activity: find a piece in your folder that represents change. Students can do this in pairs or small groups....I've developed self-assessment questions with students to help them look back at dialog journals, to look at the different kinds of changes people make in their writing over time.

Develop criteria and a process for assessing portfolios.

Once the portfolios are developed, there has to be some process for assessing their contents. Sometimes teachers ask students to analyze the completed portfolio in a written form, and to present that analysis in a conference with the teacher or to the other students. This assessment may focus on whether they have met their goals, or other questions raised by you and the students (there are sample self-assessment questions in the Appendix). Students might assess each individual piece, or compare pieces and develop their assessment of their overall performance and progress as indicated by the work in their portfolio. Then there is often some kind of feedback from the teacher and, perhaps, other students. At this point teachers can share their observations as well. Criteria for assessing portfolios derive from your philosophy about literacy and literacy education as well as the purposes of assessment. They should have a direct relationship to the criteria established for keeping folders, and to the instructional goals established early in the process. Criteria should be developed with the students.

Marilyn Collins is a Center Director for Literacy Volunteers of New York City. She organized a workshop for volunteers and students in her center titled, "What is Progress for Me?" She recalls:

> I decided to do this workshop for several reasons. First, because I worried that students and tutors often had a narrow view of what progress is.... Second, I knew that our staff had had great difficulty developing criteria to look at student's reading and writing progress. We needed help. To develop authentic criteria for our students, I believe we need to collaborate on the development of this criteria with the students. I attempted to do that at the workshop. Third, we had promised students that we would help them to review their portfolios to look for changes in their reading and writing, but I had no plan in mind on how to do this. I felt I needed to keep this promise and thought it would make sense to use the criteria the students came up with as a place to begin. (Collins, 1992, no page numbers)

Marilyn Collins began the workshop by talking personally about her own criteria for judging her progress as a reader. Then she asked the students and tutors to talk in their small tutoring groups about what progress would mean to them:

I asked them to think of specific changes they had noticed in how they read and write. I also asked them to talk a little about changes they saw in other members of their group that told them that person was making progress. The tutors acted as the scribes in this discussion. Then we shared what people said.

What impressed me was the mosaic of changes described by the students, ranging from small skill specific changes to changes in their reading and writing process, to changes in their self-esteem and risk taking. People seemed uplifted about sharing these changes.

I collected the lists made by the groups and sorted them into categories which I typed up and handed to each group. I'm hoping to ask people to use these criteria to help them review their work in their portfolios at the end of June.... The workshop reinforced the value of group discussions as part of the assessment process. Reflecting on progress in the group served to make it more exciting and to merge assessment with instruction. While one member of the group was being self-reflective the others were learning new ways to look at themselves.

Teachers' and tutors' roles in assessing portfolios remains problematical. For example, Pauline Clarke (1992), a Center Director for Literacy Volunteers of New York City, saw that the tutors in her center "would not allow the students to place their pieces of writing into the [portfolio] until it was rewritten and reflected the product that they (tutors) felt it should look like.... This reinforced the concept of product as being more important than process" (pp. 14-15). When Pauline Clarke probed more deeply, she found that tutors often were not able to describe the process of students' progress through their writing drafts. Pauline Clarke felt that, "We were so product... oriented, we were failing to see the process, and thus could not tell the students what they were doing, nor the type of progress we were observing due to our lack of knowledge or vocabulary about the process" (pp. 15-16). This illustrates the importance of engaging in portfolio assessment as part of a larger professional development program. Pauline Clarke is going to ask the tutors in her center to write a dialogue journal with her in which they reflect on their work and their students' progress and she responds with support, help, and suggestions for professional reading or other related activities.

Jane MacKillop and her colleagues where have been working on a more formalized process for portfolio assessment, developing a rubric for holistic grading of portfolios. The scheme they are developing assesses the extent to which there has been learning, or progress toward meeting the student's goals, during the period covered by the portfolio; it does not assign a score that judges the level of skill achievement, but focuses on progress. For example, a score of "4" means that there is clear, consistent progress reflected in the portfolio. There is a significant difference between early and later pieces of writing, for example, in terms of the range of topics, type of writing, and so on. Reading might show movement from being a nonreader to being proficient at some level, or movement to a broad range of types of reading materials and types of reading purposes achieved. A score of "3" shows changes that are a little narrower than those in the 4 category, and in category 2 the student probably would show evidence of learning in one particular type of reading or writing. At category 1 the learner does not seem to be making progress, from the evidence in the portfolio.

Carol Clymer-Spradling, at El Paso Community College, is working with her staff to develop a set of skills lists that will provide a framework for assessing progress reflected in portfolios. She finds ESOL literacy assessment is particularly challenging, because most of the checklists and other kinds of tools that are available do not take language acquisition into account.

Carol Clymer-Spradling

Carol Clymer-Spradling, director of literacy programs, El Paso Community College:

The scales developed for writing for native language learners just aren't sensitive to all of the issues related to language acquisition. And there really aren't any scales that anybody's come up with yet that do take language acquisition into account. You just get the concept of meaning, and meaning as it relates to a four point scale, when in fact the second language learner may need an eight point scale and we just don't have those scales developed yet.

Peggy McGuire

Peggy McGuire is not alone in her questions at this point:

I think that the easy part about portfolio assessment is building up a body of documents that the learner has generated or that the learner has worked with. I think that if they have the time, the staff is capable of looking at the documents and saying, "Look, I notice this, I notice that, I notice this," and the harder part is getting learners to do the same thing, and trusting themselves to make those kinds of observations about themselves. We're not as good as we'd like to be in facilitating learners looking at the broad range of their work, and identifying where the growth is happening and where the needs are arising. So we're trying different ways to do that.

So that's number 1 hard thing. And number 2, how do you pull all that information together and do something with it? We're concerned about how to make sure that what we're doing in the classroom reflects what we're learning. I hear from teachers a lot, "I wonder if I'm adequately using what I'm learning about individual students and about the group as a whole and feeding that back into what I do in the classroom." There's a lot of information floating around. A good example is when you look at the writing that happens in dialog journals and over time there are specific things you can see happening. Sentences that they write are more packed with meaning, and sentence structure is more sophisticated, but also there is more discussion happening about what's going on in my head, or what's going on in this class for me. So then the question is, when the teacher reads that, what does she do with that information?

Portfolio assessment is a qualitative process; it will not yield neat rows of numbers, but rather narrative assessments that relate to your and your students' ways of understanding what constitutes progress in the area in which the portfolio is being used. For example, if you are concerned with the extent to which students are becoming more involved with their children's education, **you have to decide what constitutes progress during the early planning steps.** Only then will you be prepared to identify the criteria for assessing portfolios further down the road. Often teachers return to Stage One from this step, or to the earlier steps in Stage Two, before moving on to implementation, because they realize that they have not done the prerequisite background work needed to assess the portfolios once they are created.

IMPLEMENTING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

You may be starting with a new group of students, or you may be continuing with a group that has become accustomed to another assessment approach. In both cases, you have to bring students into the process of continuing planning, implementing, assessing, and revising.

STAGE THREE: Implement portfolio assessment.

Introduce the concept to students at the beginning of instruction, when possible.

Students should begin thinking about portfolios as an integral part of instruction, from the beginning of class. They will become involved in developing learning contracts and setting goals to inform instruction and to form the basis for later decisions about criteria for creating portfolios and assessing their contents. Portfolio assessment has to become part of orientation for new students and staff, and time has to be set aside at the beginning of the term to lay the groundwork for the ongoing assessment process.

"At first I thought it was ridiculous. Then when I picked out different things to put in it, when I really got into it, I could see the difference in my work. You pick out what you want to put in your portfolio. It makes you feel good that you can pick out pieces yourself."

Jean Brown, literacy student, NY.

Janet Kelly

Janet Kelly teaches and administers Read/Write/Now, a community-based literacy program in western Massachusetts. Students' contracts become part of the framework for assessment:

Before class sessions start, we have appointments with individual students for half an hour. We talk about goals and about doing or updating their learning contracts. We originally tried to do learning contracts within the framework of the class, but we decided it was important to do conferences. The contracts are written up or examined about every three months. Conferences always take more time than we ever think they will.

Shash Woods

Shash Woods is trying to figure out how to move into portfolios with her class:

Next time, I would find some way at the beginning of the class to explain that we were doing portfolios and maybe get into some criteria discussion in the beginning so people

Shash Woods
(cont.)

were mentally prepared for the fact that they were going to keep their work and evaluate their own work.

The first time I tried to use portfolios, with no warning, in the last class I wanted to get a sense of closure and wrap up so I went out to the store and I bought some kind of fancy looking cardboard folders and I made up a cover sheet for the items that they were going to choose. The cover sheet just says, "My favorite work, fall 1992." and it just asks them to put their name, give a title for the piece, and then just answer two questions: what I like about this piece of work, and what I learned while doing it. I wanted them to pick the three pieces that were their favorites out of everything they had done the whole fall and then answer those two questions about the pieces; we only had time to pick two because people are writing so slowly. Plus, people really enjoyed sifting through their folders and that took longer than I thought it would. I think I left half a class for it and I should really have spent the whole class on it. It would have been great.

The beginning of every class is really a bonding process, and talking about the criteria for your learning is a real abstract topic. I guess I didn't know how to introduce it at the beginning while we were bonding. So this time I introduced folders, dialog journals, a new reading and writing list that has room for them to comment about what they're reading, but we still haven't talked about portfolios.

ESOL teachers have to think particularly carefully about this step, because it depends heavily on verbal explanation as classrooms practices shift; this may be problematic with adults who are only beginning to learn English. Cooperative learning can be an effective response; more advanced English learners can work with those at a more beginning stage who are from the same language community to explain the portfolio process in ways that are culturally as well as linguistically coherent for other learners.

Many ESOL practitioners do not allow or encourage students' use of their native language in the classroom. However, Auerbach (1993) argues with this practice; she makes a strong case that it is rooted in teachers' needs to control the situation, and its effectiveness is not supported by research (or the experience of ESOL practitioners and students). She provides extensive references to literature as well as examples of projects in which ESOL learners have successfully worked together, using their native language as appropriate.

Create folders to capture the process and the products of learning.

Introduce folders and journals or other mechanisms you decide to use. Most of our students' goals have to do with literacy practices outside the classroom. These may include reading to their children, shopping differently, participating in community organizations, or other kinds of activities that are not easily documented. Portfolio assessment requires that we creatively figure out ways to reflect new literacy practices in folders and portfolios. This may be

as simple as writing about them in dialog journals. Or it may include gathering evidence, such as copies of restaurant menus or copies of the title pages of books that have been read to children. Evidence of using math in daily life might include copies of receipts for purchases made according to a budget, or copies of ads that were compared to find a best buy. At first, students will need help remembering to put material in their folders, and remembering to bring materials from outside the classroom. Sometimes students can help each other find creative ways to document new literacy practices; students often get ideas about things to contribute to their own folders by examining other students' folders as part of a group activity.

Many practitioners are experimenting with ways to encourage students' self-reflection on an ongoing basis. They often begin by using a simple form, asking students to identify what they learned this week, how they learned, and what they want to do next week. This often becomes a repetitious activity, however. Read/Write/Now in Massachusetts is experimenting with ways of varying the conversations and the questions each week. Alexander (1993) used a similar set of questions on weekly self-evaluation form at Operation Bootstrap in Lynn, MA and writes: "It was a pretty dry activity that qualified as the week's most boring activity. Gradually, each teacher found other ways to meet her own goals" (p. 35). Alexander offers suggestions about ways to facilitate a group process within which each individual can focus on his or her learning without separating that process from group interaction. The next step is to figure out how to document these conversations so students can keep a record in their folders.

It is difficult to collect evidence of oral language use and group participation. This is particularly important in ESOL; many of the teachers who participated in this guide talked about the ways that folders and portfolios get skewed in the direction of collectible evidence. In order to document progress in ESOL, they keep audio tapes and, sometimes, video tapes. However, the logistics for taping are complicated, and it is difficult to assess and organize folders and the portfolio without stopping to listen to each tape. We need to develop more resources to support taping and a system for labeling tapes or keeping a tape journal so that we can get access to the learning reflected on the tape easily.

The same is true for group participation. Students often talk about program impact in terms of feeling less shy, participating more fully in group discussions, and being more assertive about their opinions. Video and audio tapes can capture these important areas of growth, but need to be documented in some way that makes it easy to review them during the process of organizing folders and developing portfolios.

Peggy McGuire

It is very complex to deal with the things we can see that are not written down, like what happens in class, what happens in a discussion where somebody for the first time ever tells a story about abuse in her life and says that she has never told anybody this before. Now, what do you do with that information and how do you document it? The classes are creating environments in which people are learning and growing and doing things that they haven't done before and feeling really good about that. But how do you codify it, how do you use that to build further learning, and how do you document it?

Develop criteria for moving materials from folders to portfolios.

Although you may have decided on the broad guidelines for the criteria, your students have to apply those guidelines to decide on their own individual criteria. For example, you may ask students to include their "best" work, but students have to decide what that means for them.

Melody Schneider

Melody Schneider's students are in charge of organizing their folders in preparation for developing portfolios:

A working folder is everything — drafts and notes and scraps and finished things and not finished things and pieces of reading and lists of things that people have read and lists of things that people have written and copies of title pages and things people bring in from home and from work that they've been working on — so it's this mishmash of everything. Then I ask students to organize it. I say, "If you were going to put all your work together in a book, how would you organize it?" And we talk about all different kinds of ways of organizing it. It could be chronologically, or it could be by what you like and what you hate, what you felt was successful and what wasn't, it could be by alphabetical order, by subject area — and then we just talk about how you organize things, in general. Then they go through and just start looking at everything, and saying, "Well, I think this should be here, and I want to organize mine by dates," and so everything would have been dated and they do that — it really depends on how the students want to view their stuff.

What has come out of that is that they start discussing it kind of naturally. I haven't organized any specific discussion at that point or given them any prompts — I just say, "Look at it and organize it." But what I found is that they start talking to each other, saying things like, "Remember when we did this?" or one woman said, "God, I can't believe this used to be a problem. I can't believe I used to have a hard time with this." So, they were able to get a larger picture of the things that they have struggled with and gone through and learned and what was really hard for them. They were able to feel a broader picture of their accomplishment and change — or not change— what was still staying with them, what they need to still work on.

I give that a lot of time and after they've organized their folder, I have them list how they've organized it, so that they have a sense of everything. And then we talk about how we want to evaluate it. If we've been doing a whole bunch of things as a group, then I will ask the group, "Do we want to look at our work as a group?" We could have one set of criteria by which the whole group evaluates themselves; as a group we can create the criteria for selecting things for our portfolios and then talk about them with each other. Or have we been on individual paths, and should the individuals decide, based on what

Melody Schneider (cont.)

they've been working on, what they want to hold up as their evaluation criteria. So we'll talk about all the ways you can look at your growth.

One person said, "I want to be able to say, 'These are my achievements.'" So he wanted to do what he called his achievement folder. We talked about what that word meant to him and he wrote out a definition; then he went through his folder and he picked things and every time he picked something he held it to his criterion — he asked, "Would this be an achievement, compared to all the other things I could have in here?" and if it was, he would pull it out. After he'd gone through and chosen his pieces, I also went through and I picked some things, or I would say, "I agree with you here, I remember this." It depends. But I added some things to it so it would be a kind of collaboration. But the students are always the first to go through their stuff. Then they write about why each piece is what they said it is — why this is an achievement for him. That is the general process we've been going through.

Diane Rosenthal

Diane Rosenthal begins helping students move from folders to portfolios by talking to them about change in order to begin developing criteria:

We discussed about change — how do we keep track of change in our lives? Students came up with rich and varied responses, such as keeping track of birth and death certificates, photographs, watching how your children change. We brought it back to the situation in the class. We've been doing a lot of reading and writing — how do we keep track of change here? We had several discussions, and then asked students to sift through their reading and writing folders while they talked about what they were noticing.

At another site Diane Rosenthal works with:

In small group discussions, tutors and students look through reading and writing folders, and have a guided discussion on changes — what do you feel is a significant piece of writing? most memorable? favorite reading? something you can read now and not before? The staff summarize the discussion and it goes into students' folders and it's given to students for their comments.

Move material from folders to portfolios.

You may have to help your students develop their ability to reflect on and analyze their work; students may start out suspicious or frustrated when this process is radically different from anything they've been involved in before. Students should focus on the learning process as well as final products. It may be appropriate to include drafts of pieces of writing, for example, or dialog journal entries in which students discuss their struggles to master something new. These decisions can be made collaboratively with students. Teachers can choose pieces for the portfolio to add to the pieces chosen by the students. Portfolio assessment can be a powerful contribution to participatory instruction when students move into increasing amounts of responsibility for the entire range of decisions.

Lorna Irizarry

Lorna Irizarry, a literacy student:

At first it felt kind of strange. The first step was to decorate your portfolio, to make it more personal. Then you can review the work you've done. He gave us questions. We write it in the beginning of the year, and in the middle and at the end. And I can really see the changes in the books I've read, and in my writing. I like it a lot because it teaches me from the work I've done before. I look backwards and forward to see how I've increased my writing skills.

Assess the portfolio.

Anne Lawrence

In all my experiences, students are really excited about portfolio assessment and they feel, "This makes sense. I should be assessing my own progress." I also tell them that assessing their own progress will help them get less frustrated with their learning process. It takes them a while to depend upon themselves to assess their reading and writing and to be able to see progress and talk about it. But that's just like when students first come into a class that's a whole language process-oriented classroom, it takes them a while to get the hang of what's going on here and to learn the language of it.

The reflection process may be particularly difficult for ESOL literacy learners. Janet Isserlis (1992) explains,

> The notion of stepping back to look at progress over a period of time is a very school-like idea. Those of us who went to school in this country knew that report cards would come quarterly....For learners with little prior schooling or from cultures where teachers dictate what occurs in a classroom, the concept of self-assessment may be difficult to grasp. Surely, many learners have an innate sense of their own movement with language and literacy, but the expression/verbalization of that progress may not be within the frameworks they have developed or use in describing learning. (p. 6)

Janet Isserlis also points out that cultures vary in the degree to which they consider it appropriate to identify one's achievements; this also varies by gender. Some cultures are committed to a sense of group rather than individual progress, and others focus on assuring the teacher that he or she has been successful rather than discussing the learner's progress. Your students' cultural backgrounds provide rich resources as well as arenas for struggle; it is important to work with your students to adapt the portfolio assessment process to their cultural backgrounds and situations. Auerbach (1993) advocates for ESOL learners at more advanced levels working with those at more beginning levels from the same language community, using native language translations as appropriate and helping to adapt new practices so that they are more culturally appropriate.

Teachers struggle with the relationship between their knowledge and judgments and those of their students during the process of assessing portfolios. There are questions about who sets the standards and who assesses the extent to which standards have been met. It should be remembered that this is not a standardized assessment process. You are not judging the extent to which students have met some predetermined standard set by outside experts in order to compare your students with others' work. You and your students negotiate the standards in relation to the instructional goals and the curriculum, and you have to negotiate assessing progress together as well. It is important to use your knowledge to help students learn to see their own progress and to give students the benefit of your experience and expertise. At the same time, it is important to learn about progress through the students' eyes, so that there is a richer overall understanding of learning and teaching in the end.

Lorna Irizarry

At the end of the year we all get together and have a little party and we can read something from our portfolios. I like it because I can say, "I did this, I increased a lot, personally, I've seen this increase in my work."

EVALUATING AND REVISING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

"This fall . . . people kept asking me, 'Are we going to share our portfolios this year? There are things I want to put into the portfolio this year.' They definitely want to continue with portfolio assessment."

John, ABE teacher, New York, NY

The process of engaging in portfolio assessment is cyclical; as you implement it with students, you learn more about how people learn that contributes to your beliefs about literacy. This has an impact on how you plan for the next year or semester. Provide an opportunity for systematic reflection on the process, including your own experience, your colleagues' experiences, your students' reflections, and those of others, such as program administrators, who have a stake in assessment.

STAGE FOUR: Evaluate the process and revise it for future use.

Mallory Ciarke

Mallory Clarke is in her second quarter of figuring out how to help her students move into portfolio assessment. She describes this as a particularly troubled group of learners who are unable to deal with large amounts of ambiguity and an overwhelming number of choices:

My plan was to put together a learning contract between each student and myself and we would develop portfolios at the end of the quarter to document what went on in the learning contract — what was learned. Then I would write letters of evaluation that the students seemed to want, based on the portfolios. This was my first time using portfolios. We had writing folders and reading folders prior to that, stacks of stuff, and we continued to. But it was impossible for my students to do what I asked them to do. The contracts were too complex, too wide ranging, and required too much writing for students who were in the very beginning stages of writing.

The contract asked for information like, what do you do now with reading and with writing, what would you like to do, what do you think of yourself as a learner, what kind of a learner are you? a lot of questions demanding meta-cognitive stuff. I've been in programs where it would have worked, but it was way too difficult a task here. Even though we brainstormed possible answers to each question on the blackboard and the students copied the answers that were appropriate for them, it was still too difficult. So we ended up with individuals reviewing their own reading folders and their own writing folders and writing some about that. We downplayed portfolios.

So second quarter I developed a whole series of initial assessment tools so I could get a better handle on who my students were. We did a chart on how do you use reading now and how do you use writing now, and we did a self-assessment about attitudes, and a questionnaire and some writing about learning problems and what did they know about their own? There was a skills list on reading and writing. Overall, the questions were much more focused and directed. The space to write in was smaller. Instead of having the ques-

Mallory Clarke (cont.)

tions in vague narrative requests, there were charts and "mark here" rather than writing a paragraph, and that helped a whole lot. We did an evaluation of a writing sample, and we also did an evaluation of their understanding of the process of writing. They drew pictures of what they did, starting from when they got the assignment to when they handed it in, and they analyzed it for various stages of the writing process or other things they added. And we'll do that again at the end, and compare pre and post.

When we get to the point of doing the portfolios - my plan is to give them quite a bit of time to set up the portfolio, to look through their back papers. There are specific things I'm going to ask them for, an early writing assignment and a later writing assignment, and their analysis of the difference between the two, so there will be three pieces of paper stapled together. There will be documentation of each of the things in their contracts.

Now that we've gone through this much, a little less structure will be needed each quarter. My experience shows that it is possible to use this approach with learners who are particularly blocked in their ability to learn, as well as with learners who can deal with less structure from the beginning.

Portfolios can become the center of an ongoing process of reflection as students continue in the program. Anne Lawrence (1992) worked on portfolios with John, an ABE teacher, and his students. She asked him later whether he thought all the work was worth it, and he responded:

> When we did the share last year and people shared their portfolios there was a lot of pride. There was a lot of pride in what people had to share and they really saw their improvement. Before with the test, it's almost like a — what's the word — random type thing. Test scores are random, sometimes you go up and sometimes you go down, but you never know why. But, with the portfolio the students saw exactly where they improved, they saw the kind of gain. People still talk to me about that. After you had come to the class this fall and we were talking about portfolios, people kept asking me, "Are we going to share our portfolios this year? There are things I want to put into the portfolio this year." They definitely want to continue with portfolio assessment. (p. 7)

From this stage you may decide to return to any of the previous stages of reflection and decision-making: Choosing, Planning, or Implementing. Return to Choosing if you need time to re-examine your basic assumptions and beliefs. Return to Planning if you need to think again about processes and procedures. Return to Implementing if you are fine turning the process, adapting it to a new group and incorporating your new learning.

THE IMPACT OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

"Seeing my progress in the portfolio makes me know I can do the work. I'm remembering that I can do something."

Lorna Irizarry, literacy student, New York City

Portfolio assessment is practical and useful, according to the practitioners and students who participated in this project. It redefines the scope of assessment, and provides a way to look at personal development as well as academic skill growth as reflected in new literacy practices. It facilitates a deeper level of reflection for students, and a deeper level of communication between students and teachers. It also promotes professional development and practitioner inquiry.

Students who are involved in portfolio assessment develop new insights into their learning, new skills, and new attitudes about learning. Anne Lawrence (1992) writes about John, the ABE teacher with whom she worked, and his class:

> With students taking more control of the assessment process, John noticed that students are also taking more control of their learning. They are picking the subjects and topics they want to work on and telling him how they want to work on them.... John also mentioned that his teaching has become more learner centered and he is doing less directing in the classroom.... He has discovered that students can do much more on their own than he thought. (pp. 7-8)

Mallory Clarke

Mallory Clarke teaches ABE at Seattle Central Community College, Seattle, WA:

The people for whom I'm seeing the most dramatic changes in their ability to read and their ability to write and their ability to talk about both those things are the people who have been here for two quarters, and I don't think it's just time. In the first quarter, we got the beginning of "Oh, I'm supposed to think about my own education; I need to think of myself as a teacher would think of me. I don't seem to be able to do that, but at least I can conceive of that now." And then they got so they could actually do it in the second quarter.

Janet Kelly

Students know now that it's their learning and it's their program.

Diane Rosenthal

As a result of using portfolios, students' confidence in themselves and in their accomplishment increases and students begin to see things they might not have identified as accomplishments. There is more group cohesiveness and more commitment; students take more responsibility for their own learning but also feel very invested in other students in their groups. There is a generally enhanced feeling of community among learners.

Lorna Irizarry

I was always told I'd never learn how to write. Since we've been doing journals and portfolios, now I write 2 or 3 pages and if there's a piece I really like, it goes into my portfolio so that I can remember that I did this piece that I really liked. It's the best way the students can know about what they're learning, if they're doing good in class. I notice that I'm doing receptionist work and I was told I could never do that. Seeing my progress in the portfolio makes me know I can do the work. I'm remembering that I can do something.

Portfolio assessment allows students and teachers to talk about students' views of their learning in new and important ways. Teachers consistently talk about how much they learn about their students, and how useful it is. This is supported by the public school literature. For example, Lamme and Hysmith (1991) write about the impact of a school implementing portfolio assessment:

> Many teachers reported changes in the way they taught based upon how they now viewed the children in their classrooms. Using a portfolio assessment system has helped the teachers become more reflective about how and what they are teaching. They are becoming more responsive to individual children within the curriculum (p. 640)

Shash Woods

One man picked one dialog journal page and a reading for his portfolio. In both cases, what he seemed to enjoy was the content he was exposed to — it was about Jesse Jackson and about Malcolm X. He wrote, "I was proud about learning about Malcolm X." I would have said that the content was important to him, but I wouldn't have picked content as the thing that I'm the most proud of having communicated. I thought he

Shash Woods (cont.)

would focus on his skills. It was great for me as a teacher to be so surprised, because this is a guy who I have a lot of contact with in class. I feel like I know how he learns and that we're working well together, and that he's making incredible progress, so I kind of thought what I'd see in the portfolio would mirror my observational relationship with him, and it didn't at all.

One of the women chose a piece of freewriting; she said what she liked was that she learned how to spell some words and how to begin and end sentences. That actually startled me too, because I was impressed with the passion and the personal voice and the storytelling ability, although we worked back into the piece at different times, working on spelling some of the words and, at one time, talking about periods. But I kind of tossed that off because I was more into the content and the fluency than I am into those things, but obviously that was real important to her.

Portfolio assessment also promotes professional development and practitioner inquiry (see Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993). Zessoules and Gardner (1992) comment:

> In effect, authentic assessment requires teachers to step back from their traditional roles at the head of the classroom, allowing students to take center stage and teachers to become accomplished guides in the process of self-assessment. It is this act of stepping back that enables teachers to practice and infuse the habit of reflection into their own pedagogical approach. In this light, teachers become researchers in the classroom, posing central questions to better inform their sense of students' learning, their approach to teaching strategies, and the development of their own reflective habits. Just as authentic assessment asks students to develop the habit of pausing to reflect in order to move forward, so, too, must teachers adopt the practice of taking time to stop and think, to observe and make sense of the activities and progress of their students. (pp. 65-66)

Anne Lawrence

People are really excited about portfolio assessment, but now they want to know more about teaching reading and writing using more of a process approach, using a whole language philosophy. Students become more directive, more assertive about what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. And we're able to more clearly talk about their reading and writing, to assess the problems as well as what is improving.

Mallory Clarke

Portfolios have required that I observe my students more closely because everything is a lot more concrete than before. I'd always had my eyes peeled, but it was sort of undirected; now it's a lot more directed and a lot more concrete.

Jane MacKillop

Jane MacKillop does professional development and consulting in New York State:

Portfolios promote a greater curiosity about how students learn; teachers want to understand students' responses and choices. They also use fewer workbooks and ask for more staff development.

And some teachers feel it contributes to teacher and student satisfaction and decreases attrition.

Jane MacKillop

Portfolio assessment has minimized student attrition, and it seemed to keep staff better too. Portfolios help adults see where they're at and therefore they stay. They stop comparing themselves with other students and look at their own progress instead. Portfolios value teacher judgment; by giving multiple choice standardized tests, the message is that nobody's judgment counts except for the test publisher.

The impact of portfolio assessment can be felt by students and teachers as well as by programs. It will be important to follow students and teachers as they accumulate experience with portfolio assessment over longer periods of time. We may see broad program impacts as well as impact in student and teacher development.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AS A PROGRAM PROCESS

"Up to this point, we have not had our own place to have a program. We've rented space at a local boys and girls club, we get our mail somewhere else, I work out of my home — it's a real community-based organization. Part of our talking together has been how to creatively do something within those constraints."

Peggy McGuire, director
Germantown Womens' Educational Project.

Many of the teachers who spoke to me during the preparation of this guide were getting involved in portfolio assessment as a personal professional decision rather than in response to a program policy. Their administrators supported their learning and experimentation with new ideas, and they usually worked within programs that had a whole language and, sometimes, a participatory literacy philosophy.

Program-wide implementation

I also spoke with some program administrators who are trying to develop portfolio assessment as a programmatic process. Their tasks are different from those facing individual teachers. These administrators must help groups of teachers arrive at some consensus on instructional philosophy, the purposes of assessment, and the relationship between assessment and instruction. Then they have to develop some common understanding of how they will approach portfolio assessment, including the extent to which diversity in portfolios will be celebrated or viewed as a problem.

Roe (1991) studied the experiences of 20 public school teachers who were told they had to engage in portfolio assessment. She finds that portfolio assessment became a "cultural event;" Roe explains that,

> adopting portfolio assessment was not a simple incorporation of an alternate assessment tool. It was molded by their belief systems about children and their literacy development. As a result, for these teachers, portfolio development lacked the theoretical like-mindedness of those who write about it. Therefore, these teachers' disparate views exposed a political component of portfolio assessment.... Its political nature stems from the entrance of a teacher's literacy knowledge and what he or she counts as a valid literacy event into the decision points connected with portfolio assessment. (p. 12)

In addition, portfolio assessment made these teachers feel that their work was quite public, which was different from the privacy they experienced in the past. Working with a group of teachers to adopt portfolio assessment is an organizational development process, demanding all of the forethought, planning and ongoing communication required of such processes.

Carol Clymer-Spradling

Carol Clymer-Spradling, director of literacy programs at El Paso Community College, began the process by working with the entire staff to develop a coherent philosophy of participatory literacy instruction. This has taken a number of years of hard work:

We've been working much more on participatory curriculum than we have on assessing what we're doing; we've just gotten to the point where we feel that we like the curriculum and the way that we get the students involved in deciding what they want to learn. Now we have to look at the fact that we haven't gotten to the issue of getting the students involved in assessing what they're learning.

They began looking at assessment by focusing on the initial process of involving adults in the program:

We were losing a lot of people at the beginning of our program, giving them the Woodcock Test of Language Proficiency, which is a test that is available in Spanish and English — it's not a paper-pencil test, but it still didn't give us the information we needed. We sat there and we gave them this test and then we'd say, "Come back to this class at such and such a time," and we had a huge attrition between that first intake and the actual class period. So we totally did away with that and we worked out a two-week exploration process, and that took us a good year to get that system nicely working and doing what we want it to do.... Our retention has changed, a good 60-70% from that initial time drop out, that first time and then we never see them again. Our retention was always pretty high once they got in the program, but we still had this big group of people that wouldn't come back to us, and that has changed a lot.

Now Carol Clymer-Spradling and her staff are working on developing an ongoing assessment system using portfolios and involving consultants.

Now we're at the point where we're using assessment to learn about what we're doing. We still have monthly meetings, but we're bringing in consultants to help us formulate what we're doing and take us through this process of identifying the outcomes that we're trying to get and coming up with our procedures and then coming up with our portfolio system that has some beginning, middle and end, and some process of moving a student from one level to the next and then also has that participatory element in it. We have these big workshops maybe three, four times a year, and then everybody has different tasks that they try to develop and then we come back and see how far we are on them.

We have been working for one whole year to get our tutors and learning facilitators to identify what it is that they want the students to be able to do when they're finished with our program. In my view, if you don't identify that, you can't have a portfolio system of assessment that's worth anything — that's valid — because you don't know what you're measuring. So, we're just at the stage of defining ourselves what we want the students to accomplish, not that we're not asking them to do it, but we're asking ourselves, how do we know when they get there, and we're getting our own picture of what that looks like, and we just haven't figured out how to ask the students that yet.

While El Paso Community College is approaching this an entire group, other programs begin more modestly. Some programs ask for volunteers among teachers and administrators to set up a planning task force or a study group focusing on portfolio assessment. The group studies the situation, designs a process and pilots it with one or two classes. They report back to the larger group of practitioners, with recommendations for expanding the pilot to the larger program. Sometimes the entire group acts as the planning body, but only a few teachers pilot an experiment with portfolios. Some teachers engage in team teaching with teachers who are more experienced with portfolio assessment. It is important to begin on a scale that feels comfortable and allows participation that is as broad as possible.

Assessment for program evaluation

One of the problems presently facing public school advocates of portfolio assessment is its relationship to school evaluation; in adult literacy, we share this concern. Assessment will be implemented slightly differently in each classroom, and administrators and teachers have to struggle with the extent to which it is necessary or important that there be some comparability across portfolios in the program. Adult literacy educators are asking how to report portfolio assessment results to funders, how to aggregate our learning in some way that makes a statement about overall program effectiveness, and how to use portfolio assessment to develop insights that will be useful to program administration as well as classroom instruction. Teachers and administrators are trying to decide how portfolio assessments can be summarized and how students can participate in the process of moving from the classroom to the program level.

Some administrators and teachers feel that using portfolio assessment to support program evaluation requires comparability among portfolios. In other words, all portfolios in a program would be required to have the same components, such as 3 writing samples or a reading log. This may compromise teachers' and students' ability to develop portfolios that reflect their unique goals, however, undermining to some extent the power of portfolio assessment. For example, Paulson and Paulson (1992) write:

> We believe that a key element in portfolio assessment is students' self-assessment, designed as well as carried out by the students.... We recognize that in order to generalize across students [parents, administrators, funders, etc.] are going to need some similarity across these collections of work but are unwilling to concede this at the price of authorship. We ask nervously, "Will the portfolios still be the students' own stories told in their own voices?" (p. 6)

Many adult literacy teachers feel that portfolio assessment is so new in adult literacy education that we need time to figure out what it looks like in the classroom before we will be able to see how it can contribute to our larger understanding of program effectiveness.

The staff at El Paso Community College hope to develop a system for assessing portfolios that will allow them to make decisions with students about movement within the program, and will help them evaluate overall program effectiveness. They are trying to create checklists that are related to students' and teachers' instructional goals; the checklists will become one basis for evaluating portfolios. This raises many issues; foremost is the question about the nature of the trade offs that are made when trying to use portfolios for both participatory instruction and

program evaluation. In addition, there are Spanish literacy, ESOL literacy, biliteracy, adult basic education, family and workplace literacy programs at El Paso Community College. Is it possible to develop a set of general guidelines that will be useful for such a range of programs; how will they need to be adapted in different settings?

Another alternative for program evaluation is to create class portfolios that will be passed on to administrators to reflect the work of the class as a group. For example, Frazier and Paulson (1992) describe a process in public schools in which the teacher works with the students to develop a portfolio that responds to the school district's goals. In this way, students' individual portfolios remain within the classroom setting and under the students' control, while the school's needs for information are addressed.

In a variation of that approach, Nancy Browning and Gail Rachor in Michigan have developed a way of using the state's Employability Skills Profile to provide a framework for instruction and assessment. Michigan requires public education to use portfolio assessment, and that includes adult basic education programs that are run through the public school system. The state also is concerned about employability, given the problems facing the state's economy right now. Nancy Browning and Gail Rachor's approach focuses on the goals rather than the structure or the contents of the portfolio. Students choose from among the academic, personal management and teamwork and communication goals, depending on their personal aspirations. Instruction and assessment are interwoven to address students' learning goals and create portfolios containing the evidence of their process and success. Nancy Browning (1993) writes, "Portfolio development and implementation require the "dual tool" of linking instruction to the exhibition, i.e., design down from the objective to the exhibition of that learning; design up to determine the strategies and assessment criteria."

Vermont's public education system is experimenting with using portfolios to conduct statewide evaluation. This is translated to requirements for particular types of items to be included in individual students' portfolios. Assessment is conducted using a variety of holistic grading techniques. The entire nation is watching for Vermont's verdict on the process, and its implications for assessment and evaluation at the local program level.

Time and space

Working conditions in adult literacy are difficult and they undermine practitioners' (and students') willingness and ability to engage in innovative practices. Many of the practitioners who talked to me during this project are working on portfolio assessment on their own time, have no office space, have no consistent class meeting space, are not paid for preparation or staff development time, have no security about their jobs from one quarter to the next, have difficulty getting access to photocopiers and academic libraries, are working part-time or as volunteers, and feel isolated. Developing and implementing portfolio assessment is a lengthy, time-consuming process that requires extra preparation time and staff development, particularly at first, and requires secure storage space for folders and, perhaps, tape or video recording equipment. Time and space were the primary problems identified during this project. Commitment to portfolio assessment requires creativity and can raise dilemmas for practitioners who want to support it, but don't want to work without pay or to risk collecting materials that cannot be kept confidential.

Janet Kelly

Everyone is part-time, and we don't have the funding for people to work as much as they have to on assessment — they're developing curriculum too. Also, orienting teachers to portfolio assessment took an extra week before classes so that people understand what they're doing. It raises questions: is this model practical — whole language approach to instruction and assessment? I know it works, I know that students enjoy learning, but it takes so much time and this field is not funded for it. I don't want to ask people to work 35 hours and get paid for 20. I think the time is well worth it; I wish funders understood the kind of time it takes.

Anne Lawrence

Space has been a real issue. Teachers don't have the same classroom in the same week, even, so where to keep the folders — some campuses allow teachers to keep their folders in the office, or students have the responsibility for keeping them - they work it out somehow.

Diane Rosenthal

I've learned how much the process is more important than the actual product. It's a slow process. People need to have patience.... The time commitment is a difficulty for volunteers and part-time teachers. It's important to make assessment a part of training so there is no false separation between assessment and instruction. Now, as people are joining the program, it's a natural part of the orientation process and the continuing staff development process. Volunteers and students come to training together, and they both are keeping portfolios through the training period; by the end of training there is real change in attitudes and understanding.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Portfolios are collections of artifacts that reflect students' literacy practices, skills and tasks. They are organized through a process that involves students in setting the criteria for choosing the contents and assessing progress, involves students in selecting the pieces for the portfolio, and engages students in reflecting on their learning process. Wolf (1989) explains that portfolios foster a sense of student responsibility, help students learn to reflect on their learning progress and process, broaden students' sense of what they have learned, and support teachers' reflection and continuing development. All of these impacts also are described by adult literacy practitioners who are implementing portfolio assessment in their classrooms and in their programs.

From the literature and their experience, a process for implementing portfolio assessment emerges as a series of major periods of reflection and decision-making:

> *"Portfolios are messy. They demand intimate and often frighteningly subjective talk with students. Portfolios are work.... What comes out of portfolio-based assessment? The immediate answer lies in integrity and the validity of the information we gain about how and what students learn. But that's far from all."*
>
> (Wolf, 1989, p. 37)

STAGE ONE: Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment.

A. Clarify your beliefs about literacy and their relationship to how you work with students.

B. Clarify the purposes of assessment, and the relationship between assessment and instruction.

C. Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your beliefs about literacy and assessment.

STAGE TWO: Plan portfolio assessment

A. Decide the areas in which you are going to implement portfolio assessment, and the types of materials you and the learners will collect.

B. Decide on a schedule for developing portfolios.

C. Decide on criteria for choosing material to move from folders to portfolios.

D. Develop a process for moving material from folders to the portfolio.

E. Develop criteria and a process for assessing portfolios.

STAGE THREE: **Implement portfolio assessment**

A. Introduce the concept to your students at the beginning of instruction, if possible.

B. Create folders and journals: ways to capture the process and the products of learning.

C. Develop criteria for moving materials from folders to portfolios.

D. Move material from folders to portfolios.

E. Assess the portfolios.

STAGE FOUR: **Evaluate the process and revise it for future use.**

CONCLUSION

> I sat back for a minute and surveyed the stacks of papers scattered across my living room floor. Drafts of my writing were piled to my left, topped by the final published manuscripts; elaborate checklists and data management flow charts were in front of me, evidence of a different kind of literacy. Over to my right were lists of books I'd read, and in back of that pile was a stack of scrap paper doodling I'd done over the past few months in which words and numbers were interwoven with elaborate swirls and framed with complex patterns of parallel lines. Large yellow sticky notes sat on top of some piles, documenting my reflections about the material in the stack. Other piles waited for my examination.

I began this project on portfolio assessment thinking that I would write about how other people do it, such as public school teachers and administrators, adult literacy educators, and adult new readers. However, the literature about preparing public school teachers to use portfolios is adamant on one central point: we learn by doing. So I began developing my own portfolio. It has been a powerful experience that leaves me a proponent of portfolio assessment on the basis of research, theory and my own experience. I encourage those of you new to portfolio assessment to begin as I did, by developing your own portfolio.

There is a groundswell of interest in portfolio assessment among adult literacy educators all over the country. I spoke with people working in volunteer programs, adult basic education state and federally-funded programs, workplace literacy programs, English for Speakers of Other Languages programs, job training programs, grassroots community-based programs, library, public school programs, college programs, community college programs, and family literacy programs while preparing this guide. I spoke with teachers, volunteers, students, staff development specialists, program administrators, and state directors. Everyone is excited about the potential of portfolio assessment, but few feel that they know how to do it.

I talked with some people who began to implement portfolio assessment as isolated individuals because they had read about it and they were intrigued, or because they used it in their public school teaching with children. In most cases, however, I found that people experienced

with portfolio assessment exist in local groups, and were introduced to portfolio assessment through some kind of organized staff development activity. In some cases they were glad to be able to implement portfolio assessment while continuing to participate in a local support structure — team teaching with someone more experienced with portfolio assessment, attending a periodic institute, or meeting as part of a teacher support group.

Many of those I spoke with who are engaging in portfolio assessment know of other practitioners in their local area who are also using portfolios. However, they often were surprised by my telephone call and thirsty for news of how portfolio assessment was being implemented in other parts of the country. **There is no national mechanism to help practitioners who are involved in portfolio assessment to continue learning and to share their experiences and resources outside their local areas.** There also is almost no literature published relating to portfolio assessment and adult literacy education, with notable exceptions (e.g., Lytle et al, 1989; Lytle and Wolfe, 1989; McGrail, 1991, 1992; Rickard, et al., 1992). The literature in portfolio assessment for those who teach children (and university students) is often quite applicable to adult literacy practitioners. However, it still requires some translation process, and it does not help adult literacy educators develop a sense of belonging to a larger group that is struggling with similar issues.

This project points to some important next steps:

1. **We must develop a number of national and local mechanisms for those who are implementing portfolio assessment in adult literacy education to support their continuing learning, sharing their experiences and resources more extensively, and reflecting on their experience to build a body of knowledge about portfolio assessment.** Support for continuing learning must include access to and support for professional development activities and preparation time. Readings should be made widely available. Participation in conferences should be financially supported. Opportunities for sharing may include a computer bulletin board, development of electronic forums such as TESL-L and AEDNET, a publication issued periodically, an annual conference, or special interest groups organized at professional meetings.

We also need to engage in research on portfolio assessment; practitioner inquiry seems particularly appropriate (see Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Isserlis, 1990). Portfolio assessment is a form of practitioner inquiry in its own right. Practitioners talk persuasively about how much they learn about their students and their practice as literacy educators by engaging in portfolio assessment. Additional support can further systematize some of these practitioner inquiry efforts and provide mechanisms for these teachers, learners and administrators to share their learning with the rest of us.

2. **We must develop the capacity to train trainers in portfolio assessment; leadership development is a priority.** Local practitioners who have been developing portfolio assessment are often our best resources for helping others learn in this area. This requires helping them develop their ability as staff developers and as leaders so that they can help other practitioners find the courage for innovation, the creativity to confront the problems, and the knowledge for proceeding. The influence of those who have been providing professional development services in this area can be clearly seen. Teachers and administrators are interested; they need resources and help.

3. **We must incorporate portfolio assessment into the indicators of program quality currently being developed in each state.** The *Model Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs* released by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (1992) identifies portfolio assessment as a sample measure for showing educational gains (Indicator 1). However, this guide illustrates that portfolio assessment can make an important contribution to a number of other indicators as well. For example, portfolio assessment has the potential to enable practitioners' development of a much more concrete and comprehensive knowledge of students' goals, interests, and approaches to learning. This can assist in program planning (Indicator 3), curriculum and instruction (Indicator 4), staff development (Indicator 5), and retention (Indicator 8).

4. **We must improve professional support and working conditions and build program capacity in adult literacy education as a way of supporting innovation.** Implementing portfolio assessment depends on using whole language, participatory approaches to instruction; instructors must feel comfortable with the teaching and learning process in order to integrate assessment. Teachers also must have paid preparation time, space in which to store folders and materials, and some job security so that the process of implementing portfolio assessment can be honored. There must be support for staff development as an ongoing process, and resources to support learning and innovation.

The federal government can provide leadership in these areas through the Office of Adult and Vocational Education and the National Institute for Literacy. State policy makers can examine funding guidelines for ways in which they can support leadership development, networking and improved staff development and working conditions. The states also can involve practitioners experienced in portfolio assessment in the process of developing the state's indicators of program quality. Practitioners in the field can come together to advocate for all of these recommendations at their local, state and national levels.

The implementation of portfolio assessment has tensions; it is not a panacea for instruction and assessment issues. It requires time, resources, and a shared commitment to take on difficult questions. It has to be reinvented in every setting, and it has to be implemented as a process, over time. We have only begun to scratch the surface of many of the most complex issues. These include the relationship between portfolio assessment for student empowerment and its uses for program evaluation; the tension between autonomy in portfolio development and definitions of accountability; questions about the role of teachers' knowledge and judgment in relation to the students' assessment of their own work; and the place of portfolio assessment in relation to the larger assessment framework in a classroom or a program. These issues are difficult, but they can be addressed through thoughtful work and larger systemic change. These issues are not unique to adult literacy educators; Calfee and Perfumo (1993) describe the problems facing portfolio assessment in public schools and conclude that portfolio assessment may disappear as another fad, may become standardized, or it, "may become a genuine revolution" (p. 536). The future hangs in the balance right now.

Most importantly, portfolio assessment, like other forms of alternative assessment, requires that we have the courage to examine the beliefs, values and assumptions implicit in our work. It requires forging new relationships between teachers and students that will present some difficult

moments for all of us. In fact, many of the practitioners who shared their work with me during this project inspired me with their courage. I hope this guide encourages more literacy educators to join their ranks in the years ahead.

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APPENDIX

Some programs and educators have generously provided examples of the forms and checklists they have created for portfolio assessment. In order to save space and paper, I am listing the questions on many of these forms rather than reproducing the forms themselves. Please read the introductory sentences for explanations of how the questions are laid out in the original forms. **If you use or adapt any of these materials, please credit the original authors.**

Germantown Women's Educational Project
December, 1992
Self-Evaluation

Dialogue Journals

The dialogue journals are a good place to start to think about what you've learned during your time at GWEP. Read through your journal before you answer these questions.

1. What do you notice when you read through your journal?

2. What changes do you notice (in what you worked on, what you wrote, how you wrote or anything else)?

Now, take a step back from the journals and think more generally about the class and what you've learned.

3. Were there things you wanted to achieve and didn't? If that happened, why do you think it happened?

4. What have you learned? This might be learning goals that you met or things you learned that weren't even originally goals.

5. Do you notice any changes in yourself, in how you feel or how you act, in and out of class?

6. What are your plans for next semester?

These forms are used by Literacy Volunteers of New York City. Students are asked to choose a sample of their reading or writing from the last four months and then discuss these questions with their tutors in relation to that sample. They can write their responses or dictate to their tutors. The questions are spaced widely apart, with a lot of room for writing the answers.

LVNYC
Writing Information Sheet

1. Why did you choose this sample for your portfolio?
2. Why did you decide to write this in the first place?
3. What kinds of things did you do to write this the way you did? Try to describe all the steps you took to create it.
4. What do you think about the way it came out? Why? Did you do anything special with it?

(In interviews, Ann Heininger, a center director for LVNYC, adds the following questions:)

5. Have you made progress? How do you know?
6. What would you like to work on next?

LVNYC
Reading Information Sheet

Name of what you read:
Author:
Description of what it was:

1. Why did you choose this sample for your portfolio?
2. Why did you decide to read this sample?
3. What kinds of things did you do to understand what you read?
4. What did reading it mean for you? Why was reading it important for you? Did you share it with someone else?

(In interviews, Ann Heininger, a center director for LVNYC, adds the following questions:)

5. Have you made progress? How do you know?
6. What would you like to work on next?

These were the questions that the students and tutors in Marilyn Collins' center at LVNYC used to discuss progress in their small group discussions:

Reading

When I think about how my ability to read a book has changed I've noticed:

Other ways I've changed as a reader that let me know I'm improving are:

Now I can read:

I feel better about my reading because:

In my group now:

Writing

When I think about what I used to do when I write compared to what I do now, I can see that:

When I edit something I have written:

I know I feel better about my writing because:

Now I can:

Other things that let me know I am improving:

Marilyn Antonucci
Read/Write/Now teacher

This is used to introduce learners to the concept and practice of using a response journal.

Reading Response Journal

What is it?

A journal in which you write about the ideas you have as you read a book.

How do you write a response?

Think about the book you are reading.
Try to connect these ideas to your own life experience.
As you think, reflect and question, listen to yourself, and then write these ideas down.
Write honestly--If you don't understand the chapter that you are reading about, write that kind of a response.
As you write, try to discover YOUR OWN IDEAS.

Try starting out with ONE of these.

1. I began to think of . . .
2. I know the feeling . . .
3. I love the way . . .
4. I can't believe . . .
5. I can't really understand . . .
6. I realized . . .
7. I wonder why . . .
8. I noticed . . .
9. I was surprised . . .
10. I think . . .
11. If I were . . .
12. I'm not sure . . .
13. I agree with . . .
14. I disagree with . . .

How long should the response be?

You decide that - as many or as few sentences as you need to respond. We will share our journal entries with each other. Other students may be interested in reading the same book too.

GERMANTOWN WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Learner's Goals

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Already Accomplished	Goal for this session	Future Goal	No Interest		EVALUATION AND COMMENTS
				ACADEMIC	
				Work on Reading:	
				Work on Math:	
				Work on Writing:	
				Work on: _____ specific subject	
				Take GED Test:	
				Arts & Lit.	
				Math	
				Social Studies	
				Science	
				Writing	
				Prepare for Trade School or College	
				JOB RELATED	
				Learn about career options	
				Learn to fill out job application forms	
				Learn to write a resume	
				Learn to read want ads	
				Learn to type	
				Learn to use a computer	
				Improve interview skills	

Already Accomplished	Goal for this session	Future Goal	No Interest		EVALUATION AND COMMENTS
				FAMILY RELATED	
				Increase knowldege about fun/ educational activities with children	
				Increase knowledge about discipline and setting limits with children	
				Increase knowledge about improving children's self-esteem	
				Increase ability to deal with school system on behalf of your children	
				Increase knowledge of family counseling resources	
				Increase knowledge of alcohol/ drug abuse treatment resources	
				Increase knowledge of physical/ sexual/emotional abuse resources	
				Increase knowledge of housing/ utility bill resources	
				HEALTH CARE	
				Obtain quality health care:	
				Dental	
				Vision	
				Gynecological	
				Pre-natal	
				Learn more about women's health care issues	
				Increase ability to handle stress	

Already Accomplished	Goal for this Session	Future Goal	No Interest		EVALUATION AND COMMENTS
				SOCIAL/COMMUNITY	
				Learn about candidates/ political issues	
				Register to vote	
				Obtain a driver's license	
				Get a Library card	
				ECONOMIC	
				Learn to budget money and organize financial records	
				Learn to open and manage a bank account	
				Learn to comparison shop and use coupons at the grocery store	
				Learn how to complete a tax return	
				SELF-DEVELOPMENT	
				Keep a journal of daily thoughts/feelings	
				Learn to draw/paint/sing	
				Jog/swim/walk/aerobics	
				Plant a garden	
				Read books to relax and reduce stress	
				Take time for walks in the park/countryside	

Melody Schneider teaches ABE at Seattle Central Community College and is a state consultant and staff development specialist in Seattle, WA. The following is her description of Sociograms:

SOCIOGRAMS

A sociogram is a strategy for observing group interaction and understanding group effectiveness.

A group of students is assigned a task or create a task for themselves. (Some possibilities include: A discussion about an important issue, a problem to solve, a project to create, etc.)

Observers sit around the group and on paper, draw a diagram of it; assigning each participant a letter or number.

As the group begins it's task or discussion, the observers draw arrows from the person speaking towards the person they are addressing. If they are addressing the group in general, the arrow points to the center of the group. If their comment receives no response, the arrow's line should be broken, if there is a response, it should be solid.

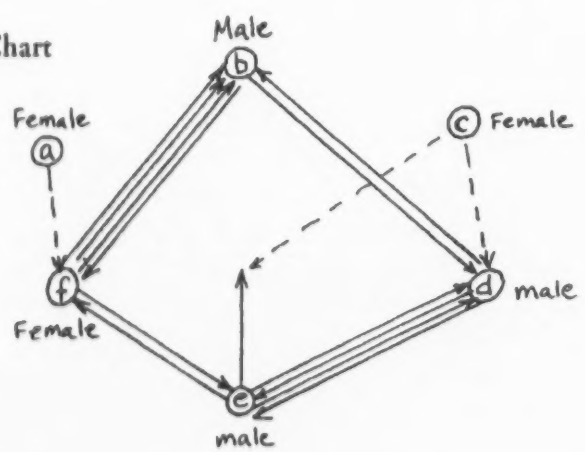
Observers should note their observation, ie.: who's talking to who, who is left out, gender, age, ethnicity or other makeup of the group, and their impressions.

The sociogram should last the entire time of the discussion.

Observers can share their charts with the group participants and discuss who dominated the discussion, who interacted with who, which participants were left out, etc. The participants can share their feelings about working in that group, and compare impressions with the observers. They can also discuss the effectiveness of the interaction, and perhaps from looking at the chart, figure out behavior changes which might create different outcomes.

The teacher can develop lessons for group interaction based on what is observed and discussed. The sociogram should be kept in the students' folders and can be added to their portfolio.

Sociogram Observation Chart



Observations:

The men do most of the talking.

(c)'s ideas are left out.

People talk to each other but not often to the group.

(a) doesn't say anything. I wonder how she and (c) feel--(b) & (f) and (e) & (d) talk to each other in pairs but don't share ideas with each other

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Many of these references discuss assessment and portfolios in the context of public schools and children. They have been selected for this bibliography because I felt that the issues they raised or the processes they detailed had clear and useful implications for adult education.

Adult Learning. Special issue on evaluation and assessment. May, 1991. Vol. 2, No. 7

This special issue is one of the few publications about assessment that is dedicated to adult education. The article by Rickard et al is an overview of the arguments for alternative assessment vs. standardized testing. The other articles include a discussion of teacher's judgment in assessment and summaries of specific alternative assessment practices in a variety of areas.

Arter, J. *Using Portfolios in Instruction and Assessment.* 1990. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 328 586

Continues a publications series from the Northwest Labs that is designed to assist educators who want to implement portfolio assessment. There are four training workshop curricula (published in 1988 and 1989). This paper focuses on how to help students engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation. The author includes lists of self-assessment questions from the literature. It also includes an annotated portfolio bibliography.

Auerbach, E.R. *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy.* 1992. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics

Chronicles the ways that the Family Literacy Project at the University of Massachusetts, an adult participatory ESL literacy project, struggled with the process of participatory curriculum development. Assessment is conceptualized as being integrated with instruction. There is a separate chapter on assessment which is very useful, containing specific information about initial, ongoing and end of cycle assessment (including checklists and other tools). The entire book, however, is relevant for literacy educators who are trying to move into a more participatory approach to instruction and are trying to address assessment as part of this larger piece of work. Elsa Auerbach's narrative of the process reinforces and illuminates our understanding of curriculum and assessment as ongoing, connected to larger issues of program development and policy.

Cochran-Smith, Marilyn and Lytle, Susan L. 1993. *Inside/Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Includes theoretical discussion of practitioner inquiry and case studies written by teachers about their involvement in research. Extensive exploration of the issues involved as well as practical information about ways of conceptualizing and conducting teacher research as staff development and as a way of contributing knowledge to the field.

D'Amico-Samuels, D. *Perspectives on Assessment from the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative" A Critical Issues Paper.* 1991. New York, NY: Literacy Assistance Center, 15 Dutch Street, 4th floor, New York, NY 10038.

Provides a concise overview of the issues around standardized and alternative assessment nationally and in New York City in particular. Then it provides explanations of the alternative assessment processes being developed by some New York City programs, including the NYC programs highlighted in this guide.

Edelsky, C. and Harman, S. "One more critique of reading tests — With two differences." In *English Education.* 1988. Vol. 20. p. 157-171.

Thorough presentation of criticisms of standardized reading tests, particularly emphasizing the extent to which they do not reflect current concepts of reading, and examination of some alternatives. Although written for teachers in public schools, the arguments are very relevant to adult literacy educators as well.

Fingeret, A. and Jurmo, P. *Participatory Literacy Education.* 1989. New Directions for Continuing Education, No. 42. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Philosophical framework for participatory literacy education as well as case studies from different types of adult literacy programs that illuminate their process of trying to implement participatory practices.

Gillespie, M. *Many Literacies: Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors.* 1990. Amherst, MA: Center for International Education.

Teacher training materials that integrate research and practice in a way that is very accessible. Includes a module on group goal setting that uses the goals packet from Read/Write/Now.

Gomez, M.L.; Graue, M.E.; Bloch, M.N. "Reassessing portfolio assessment: Rhetoric and reality." In *Language Arts,* 1991, Vol. 68. p. 620-628.

In-depth case study of a teacher implementing portfolio assessment. It raises questions about the ways in which teacher's work changes when portfolio assessment is implemented, and explores the implications. The article does a kind of de-mythologizing portfolio assessment, emphasizing the relationship between theory and reality.

Graves, D.H. and Sunstein, B.S. (Eds.) *Portfolio Portraits.* 1992. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Theoretical framework for portfolio assessment and includes a number of chapters in which teachers describe and analyze their own experience with portfolio assessment in their classrooms as well as in-depth case studies about "portfolio keepers." Many of the chapters include a wealth of practical advice gleaned from personal experience. The chapters address specific issues such as helping students learn to assess their own work as well as larger issues such as using portfolios for large-scale assessment. Although written for and by public school educators, it is relevant in many ways for adult literacy as well.

Lamme, L.L.; Hysmith, C. "One school's adventure into portfolio assessment." In *Language Arts*, 1991, Vol. 68. p. 629-640.

Overview of the process as one school implemented portfolio assessment. Includes scales for writing development, emergent reading, literature, reading record. Also includes a schema of stages of teachers' involvement with portfolio assessment.

Lytle, S.L. "Living literacy: Rethinking development in adulthood." In *Linguistics and Education*, 1991, Vol. 3, p. 109-138.

Critiques traditional notions of adult development, adult literacy, and the capabilities of adults with low literacy skill levels. Lytle calls for a new conceptualization of the relationship between adult learners and their own knowledge, beliefs, practices, plans and processes. She also calls for new relationships between teachers and learners which supports a participatory approach to instruction and assessment. Lytle's categories of beliefs, practices, plans and processes are useful for creating a conceptual framework for practitioner research, assessment, evaluation and instruction.

Lytle, S.L.; Belzer, A.; Schultz, K.; Vannozzi, M. "Learner-centered literacy assessment: An evolving process." In Fingeret, A. and Jurmo, P. (Eds.) *Participatory Literacy Education.* 1989. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Case study of an adult literacy program's process of developing and implementing an alternative assessment process.

Lytle, S.L. and Schultz, K. "Assessing literacy learning with adults: An ideological approach." In Beach, R. and Hynds, S. (Eds.) *Developing Discourse Processes in Adolescence and Adulthood.* 1989. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. p. 359-385.

Detailed conceptual framework for alternative assessment that is philosophically consistent with an ideological, meaning-based, sociocultural approach to adult literacy instruction. The explanation is grounded in discussion of the development of the Adult Literacy Evaluation Project in an urban literacy agency. This chapter will be very helpful for literacy practitioners who are trying to develop their own conceptual framework for assessment. The authors provide a combination of theoretical tools and concrete, specific examples drawn from practice.

Lytle, S.L. and Wolfe, M. *Adult Literacy Education: Program Evaluation and Learner Assessment.* 1989. Columbus, OH: Center on Education and Training for Employment, Ohio State University.

Typologies of program evaluation and assessment approaches that help to explore the differences between traditional, skills-based approaches and alternative, participatory models. They emphasize the relationship between philosophy and approach, and provide sets of questions that help practitioners place themselves in relation to the broad range of possibilities.

McGrail, L. *Adventures in Assessment: Learner-centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy.* Volume One: Getting Started. 1991. Boston: World Education/SABES, 210 Lincoln St., Boston, MA 02111

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McGrail, L. and Purdom, L (Eds.) *Adventures in Assessment: Learner-centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy.* Volume Three: Looking Back, Starting Again. 1992. Boston: World Education/SABES, 210 Lincoln St., Boston, MA 02111

These volumes include articles written by adult literacy practitioners (including ESL) in which they talk openly and concretely about their experiences with alternative assessment. Many articles include examples of checklists, goals lists, writing assessment grids, and other tools that teachers have developed over the years. These tools often can be easily adapted by practitioners in other settings. The articles include examination of the process of developing alternative assessment procedures as well as presentation of the current state of practice. They also focus on topics such as student self-assessment, the cultural component of assessment, and the relationship between assessment, program evaluation and instruction. These volumes are valuable for practitioners at all stages of exploring or implementing new assessment approaches. This is an ongoing series; contact Liz Santiago World Education/SABES for ordering information.

Paulson, F.L.; Paulson, P.R.; Meyer, C.A. "What makes a portfolio a portfolio?" In *Educational Leadership.* 1991. Vol. 48:5. p. 60-63.

Reviews a set of guidelines for portfolios, written concisely and clearly.

Portfolio News. Published quarterly. Subscriptions are available for $25 from Portfolio News/Subscriptions; c/o San Dieguito Union High School District; 710 Encinitas Boulevard; Encinitas, CA 92024.

This newsletter runs around 23 pages and is filled with a combination of short and longer articles written by educators about their experience with portfolio assessment. Many articles describe a process in which a teacher, a school, a school system or state is struggling with developing portfolio assessment to address a range of purposes. The articles are usually written clearly. There is also a literature review section and an information exchange designed to assist networking among schools and projects engaged in portfolio assessment. There is a marked lack of adult education programs represented, but the information often is useful. Adult literacy educators should consider joining the network of the Portfolio Assessment Clearinghouse, which publishes the newsletter — all it takes is sending in a brief description.

Rief, L. "Finding the value in evaluation: Self-assessment in a middle school classroom." In *Educational Leadership.* 1990 Vol. X. p. 24-29.

Classroom teacher's view of the portfolio assessment process, emphasizing the student's involvement in self-assessment. It is clearly written and follows the process step-by-step.

Rosenthal, D.J. "Encouraging reflective learning through reading, writing and assessment: A program's journey." *The Bookmark,* Spring, 1992, Vo. 50, No. 3, pp. 213-217.

Case study of the New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing's journey to develop and implement protfolio assessment.

Soifer, R.; Irwin, M.E.; Crumrine, B.M.; Honzaki, E.; Simmons, B.K.; Young, D.L. *The Complete Theory-to Practice Handbook of Adult Literacy: Curriculum Design and Teaching Approaches.* 1990. NY: Teachers College Press.

How-to information on teaching reading and writing in a whole language framework. There is a section of about 10 pages at the end offering very concrete advice on informal assessment procedures, including a sample reading behavior questionnaire.

Taylor, D. "Teaching without testing: Assessing the complexity of children's literacy learning." 1990. In *English Education,* Vol. 22, No. 1. p. 4-74.

Denny Taylor shares her experience in a summer institute as a way of focusing on the larger issue of how teachers can understand the learners' perspectives and abilities, and use that understanding to guide instruction. She presents a framework for thinking about the relationship between teachers and students in which the teacher adopts a learning stance, constantly observing, analyzing and assessing in order to make decisions from a stance of understanding the students' view. Taylor includes many specific examples. She also provides guidance for classroom observation and note-taking.

Tierney, R.J.; Carter, M.A.; Desai, L.E. *Portfolio Assessment in the Reading-Writing Classroom.* 1991. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Wealth of information about the theory and practice of portfolio assessment. The chapters examine the overarching philosophy of assessment and instruction within which portfolios are placed, and then each step in portfolio development is explored in depth in individual chapters. Specific techniques, lists and forms are presented that can be adapted to many situations. There is also an annotated bibliography. Don't be put off by the fact that this book is written about work with children; it is an important resource.

Valencia, S.; McGinley, W.; and Pearson, P.D. *Assessing Reading and Writing: Building a More Complete Picture for Middle School Assessment.* 1990. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Center for the Study of Reading Technical Report No. 500. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 320 121.

Theoretical discussion of assessment processes, placing them in relation to portfolio assessment. Particularly focuses on the dimensions of: focus, structure, mode, locus of control and intrusiveness. Explains portfolio assessment with concrete, detailed examples. Appendices include checklists and self-evaluation questionnaire.

Valencia, S. "A portfolio approach to classroom reading assessment: The whys, whats, and hows. In *The Reading Teacher.* 1990. Vol. 43. p. 338-340.

Concise summary of main points about why there is a need for portfolios, what a portfolio looks like, and how a portfolio is organized.

Valeri-Gold, M.; Olson, J.R.; Deming, M.P. "Portfolios: Collaborative authentic assessment opportunities for college developmental learners." In *Journal of Reading.* December 1991/January, 1992. Vol. 35:4. p. 298-305.

Concisely presents models for portfolio development and structure. It also discusses many of the major factors involved in developing portfolios.

Wiggins, G. "On performance assessment: A conversation with Grant Wiggins." In *Educational Leadership.* May, 1992. Vol. 49 No. 8. p. 35-37.

Grant Wiggins discusses some of the technical issues such as reliability, validity, and generalizability that pertain to portfolios and performance assessment.

Wolf. D.P. "Portfolio assessment: Sampling student work." In *Educational Leadership,* 1989, Vol., 46 No. 7. p. 35-39.

Categories of work to be included in portfolios and makes a compelling case supporting portfolio assessment, based on its impact for students and teachers in public schools.

Wrigley, H.S.; Guth, G.J.A. *Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL Literacy.* 1992. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.

This project involved site visits to ESL literacy programs across the country, and their experiences with a wide range of literacy program issues is included in this book. The chapter on assessment is excellent, reviewing the range of assessment purposes and approaches and then providing extensive specific information on alternative approaches to assessment. Although the book focuses on ESL literacy, it is much more broadly applicable. A short summary of the assessment chapter can be found in the *ERIC Q&A: Learner Assessment in Adult ESL Literacy* by Heide Spruck Wrigley (September, 1992) from the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education at the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC.

Yunori, W.C.; Tibbetts, K.A. *Practitioners' Perceptions of the Transition to Portfolio Assessment.* April 1992. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 344 194.

Study of public school teachers' perceptions about the transition from a skills-based instructional model to whole language instruction and assessment approach. Many of the issues are relevant for adult literacy educators.